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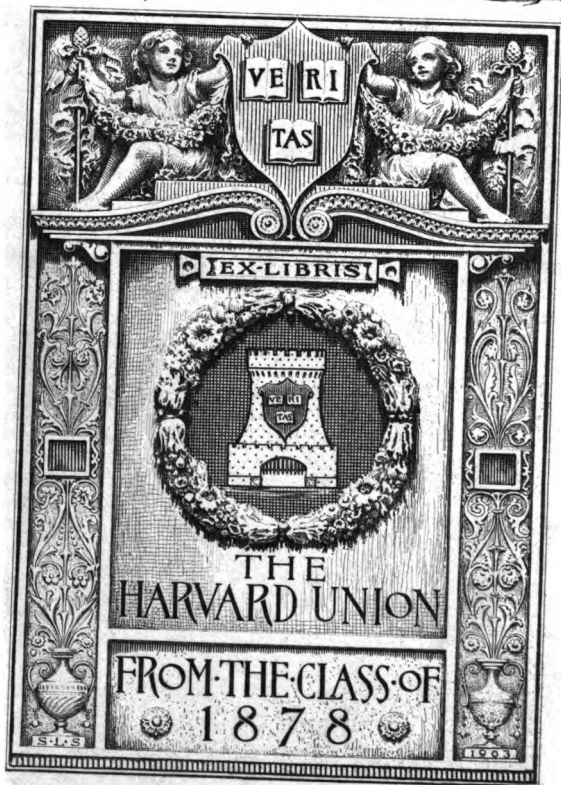


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A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

8144

A
SAILOR'S SWEETHEART.

AN ACCOUNT
OF
THE WRECK OF THE SAILING SHIP,
"WALDERSHARE,"

FROM THE NARRATIVE OF MR. WILLIAM LEE, SECOND MATE.

BY
W. CLARK RUSSELL.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1881.

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PREFACE.

WHEN, four years ago, I wrote "The Wreck of the Grosvenor," the very last misgiving that entered my mind was that it would be questioned on the score of its accuracy. I had passed eight years at sea in the Merchant Service; much of my leisure had been spent in the fore-castle among the men, and their arguments and stories were impressed on my memory. Nevertheless, several critics, whose knowledge of the sea I have the best possible reasons for suspecting, determined that various incidents narrated in the "Grosvenor" were impossible. What those incidents were I need not weary the reader by saying here; but it is certain that the incidents which my critics voted impossible were all of them *facts*, perfectly familiar to seamen, and within the experience of twenty out of every hundred seafaring men.

Fortunately for my veracity, however, confirmation of my accuracy reached me many months after the book was published, in the form of a narrative quoted in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*, a serial of high standing in the United States, and written by many able American authors. The narrative was entitled "The Wreck of the Grosvenor in Real Life." I offer no apology for quoting it.

"Those of the readers of 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor' who, like myself, first read it at the sea-shore,

with the accessories of an occasional wild storm and intercourse with some of the finest specimens of sailor character on the Atlantic coast, must have felt in a peculiar manner the photographic reality of the whole story. Striking testimony to the correctness of what sometimes seemed exaggerated has fallen in my way more than once. A broad-breasted manly skipper, in whose company I was thrown last summer, and whose face has caught much of its bronze while rescuing human lives, had an experience identical with that of the heroine and her father on the rolling deserted hull. A passing ship had taken one boatful from the wreck in a frightful sea; the officer refused to return for the three sailors, of whom one was my narrator, and their lives were saved only by an act of heroism such as is described in the 'Grosvenor.'

"And now, in a remote corner of the shipping news in my morning paper, among the sadly numerous disasters of the past month, is a story curiously resembling the circumstances of the crisis which came to the *Grosvenor* when off the Bermudas. The reader will remember the mutiny of the crew, led by the ship's carpenter; the death of the captain; the placing of the hero, the second mate, in command; the false reckoning which the latter kept; the supposed nearness to Florida, but real proximity to the Bermudas; and the intention of the mutineers to leave the mate and Miss Robertson on board, after having scuttled the vessel. Then came the suspense of the counter-plotters—the boatswain being hidden below, instead of dead, as the mutineers supposed—when the carpenter came up from below, after boring auger-holes in the ship's bottom, and deserted the vessel with the

mutineers. I copy the coincidence from the report, word for word:—

“‘Brig *L’Avenir*, from Messina for New York (before reported), arrived in Five Fathom Hole, Bermuda, March 29, in charge of Captain Page, late first officer of barque *Black Prince*, of St. John, N.B. The latter fell in with the brig March 23, lat. $28^{\circ} 40'$, long. 67° . She was drifting about in a crippled condition, with foremast, main-topmast, jibboom with all attached, carried away, and had to all appearances been abandoned. Captain Tyrrell, of the *Black Prince*, took the brig in tow, and towed her for some time, when he found it would be more judicious to adopt another course. He accordingly cut the hawser, and put his first officer with four seamen on board the brig, and ordered them to bring her to Bermuda. With some spare spars from the *Black Prince* jury-masts were rigged, and the ship reached port as already mentioned. Captain Page reports that, when he went on board the brig, he found eight feet of water in the hold. He and his crew set to work at the pumps and soon gained on the water. After the water had been lowered, he overhauled the vessel, and found three auger-holes in the hull, and two three-quarter-inch augers lying near by. One hole was forward quite low down; a second one was opposite the mainmast; and a third one was near the stern-post. After these had been stopped up, the vessel was perfectly tight, and proved herself an excellent sea-boat. The *L’Avenir* is built of white oak, is a new vessel apparently, and was well fitted. She is loaded with a cargo of oranges, lemons, and wine, and the fruit appears to be in an excellent condition. The vice-marshal in the

Court of Admiralty took charge of the ship and cargo, pending the action of the parties interested in them. The vessel had commenced to discharge cargo, April 4, by order of the Court of Admiralty.'

"When it is remembered that soon after the date of picking up the brig there followed one of the severest storms (March 30th) known in many years, the parallel is almost perfect. Could there be even the remotest connection between the wreck of the *Grosvenor* and the wreck of the *L'Avvenire*? Had the book been known on board, or had another ill-treated crew evolved from their inner consciousness just such a liberation as had occurred to the author of the *Grosvenor*?"—No. 262, August, 1879.

My reason for referring to a former novel by me and quoting the narrative I had given is merely to obtain from the reader of "A Sailor's Sweetheart" some credit for good faith. The sense of numerous shortcomings makes me anxious to emphasize the one virtue which I honestly know my sea stories possess—I mean their truth. Whatever may be the degree of importance attached to credibility in novel-writing, it is to guard against the charges brought against "The Wreck of the *Grosvenor*," that I say there is not an incident in "A Sailor's Sweetheart" that is not true. The madness of Captain Flanders, the devotion of Helen Williams, the foundering of the *Waldershare*, the incident of the water-logged brig, the final escape from the island, are all so many facts, based upon two narratives and one personal experience.

1880.

W. CLARK RUSSELL.

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A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART.

CHAPTER I.

BURMARSH.

I HAVE spent some tolerably dismal and sorrowful days in my life, as this story will explain, though I wish I could say that they were all contained in it; but the saddest day that ever my eyes opened upon was a Wednesday in June, in 1858. It was not that my shore-going holiday was about to end; though it is true that for more than three whole months I had not clapt eyes on a ship, and that in a day I was to exchange the fine summer country, the lying in bed all night, the milk and fresh butter, the going and coming as I pleased, with no man to say "sir" to and no master but my own sweet will, for a week's hard work in the West India Docks, and then a voyage that was likely to last above a year.

But this was not the worst part. Going to sea is nothing to a man who has only the shore to leave and no clinging hands to tear himself away from. Since the death of my poor old mother, who survived my father five years, and died when I was fourteen years old, my hat had covered my family and estate; I went

to sea as naturally as a boy goes home, and only loved the land as holiday ground for a frolic that was always merry enough whilst the money lasted. But now had come something else; and on this June morning, when I awoke, my heart lay in me as heavy as a deep-sea lead, and mortal man never shaved a gloomier face than the one that glowered upon me from the looking-glass as I turned to and lathered myself. For the truth was that I, William Lee, *àt* twenty-three, was not only in love, but engaged to be married. I reckoned the engagement was to be a regular Jack's betrothal, all waiting; but that would not make it the less real. The engaged ring was on her finger, and we had both of us enough love and faith to keep our hearts green and patient until the time came for the parson to give her my name, whenever that should be.

She was an orphan, just as I was. Her father, who had been a naval officer and a cousin of my mother, had died and left her three thousand pounds, and her guardian was Mr. Paul Johnson, once a lawyer, but at this time a common-councilman of the borough of Burmarsh, a town in which he had dwelt upwards of fifty years. He was a good-hearted man at bottom, but had a bad opinion of his fellows, and liked to be thought cynical. I believe he was hated by the people he sat amongst at the Town Council meetings, partly because of his mulish trick of voting out of spite, and partly because nearly every week he wrote letters to the local papers, criticizing and sneering at the Corporation. But I took no interest in these doings, and hard as he tried, Councillor Johnson never could succeed in exciting my curiosity as to them; indeed, I scarcely knew what a councillor meant, and what work

he was intended to do. I was only sure that he had nothing to do with the sea.

The old councillor had been at school with my father, and they had been good friends in after life. They came together through a lawsuit, and I have heard my mother say that Mr. Johnson acted nobly to my father on some occasions. Indeed, I have a notion that the old councillor was a sort of connection of mine on my father's side; but I never knew what, and never took the trouble to ask.

When I had come home from a voyage to China, and found my mother dead and the old house let, Mr. Johnson came to look for me, and bade me make his house my home, which I did whenever it suited me to do so; and here it was that I found Helen Williams—whom I shall call Nelly in this narrative, as that is the familiar name to me—when I landed after the voyage immediately preceding the disastrous one of which this book is the record.

I fell in love with her the moment I saw her, for men are always in a hurry in these matters, and sailors especially, who pass months without seeing a woman. It took her some time to find out what she thought about me, and she wouldn't have done it then if I had not given her a hand, as I may say, and helped her in every way I knew. Her father had only been dead six months, and her grief still hung like a kind of darkness over her; but after a while her love met mine, as the tide of a calm sea comes up the shore with little runnings and a kind of *purr*, and a glancing backwards and forwards, as you shall have seen it, though the forward movement is the steady one and the stronger.

Until just a week before I went away to sea on my seventh voyage, I think it was—that being my first trip as second mate, which I ought to feel ashamed to own, though even in those days berths in the merchant service were as hard to find as whales in the English Channel—I took her for a walk down the river, and there—for it was in the summer-time—as she stood watching the trout jump and the swallows skimming the water, and the lazy cows beyond chaw, chaw, chawing like a lot of old sailors mumbling their quids, I took her hand in mine and we just told our love to each other in plain words. We then arranged—for she was my master and did what she liked with me, though I never seemed to feel her hand at the helm, so firm and delicate was her control—that she would become downright engaged to me when I came home next time; for, said she, “that will give you time to think, and see other faces, and be sure of yourself;” and then, if I came home still loving her and wanting her, why, I might slip on a ring, and so she would wait until I could marry her. I asked if she was as likely as I to remain true? But this was a man’s question that wanted no answer in words, for her smile made me wiser than any amount of language could have done.

I went away loving her; and whenever I had a chance to send a letter home it was to her; and I came back loving her. On the very evening of the day of my arrival—no chance having offered before, and she and I being alone—I drew forth a ring and put it on her finger. She kissed me as I did so, as though this was a ceremony that needed a consecration of that kind; and God knows she was right. Her kiss made

me feel how greatly she loved me. It was the leaping up of her heart that was overjoyed I had returned safe, after the long separation and the daily prayers and fears. For the whole of this time that I was ashore we were throughout the days scarcely longer than an hour for a spell apart. Our devotion made the people of the place talk about us, for in Burmarsh you could not cross a road without some one seeing you and making news of it; and that is the case still, I hear, though the population has nearly doubled since those times.

But now had come the last day. To-morrow I was to go to London to join my ship as second mate still, though I held a chief-mate's certificate, and on that day week the *Waldershare* was to sail.

Councillor Johnson's house was in the High Street, a little way above the town, and about a stone's throw from the Wesleyan Chapel which was then newly built. It was above a hundred and fifty years old, with a great garden behind stuffed full of fruit trees—his pears were the finest in the county—and another garden in front stuffed full of flowers. It was like a perfumer's shop, with its smells of lavender, rose, violet, and such things; and I have often stood at the open window and made a regular job of sniffing, thinking to myself I had best make the most of these smells whilst I had them, for I should be going back to bilge water and the aromas of boiled salt pork presently. This morning I was slow in shaving and dressing myself, for I was constantly dropping into thought, and starting out of it to find my hands idle and my eyes fixed, with a sort of mist over them, on the beaming garden below, where the flowers stood so thickly that the place

was like a huge nosegay, and where the butterflies were cruising about like bits of paper blown here and there, and where the bees were booming with the sound of deep-toned men humming the responses in church. My window was wide open, and the whole beauty of this glorious morning came into it. "Oh, Nelly," thought I, "this is the last day we may ever spend together! Oh, Lord! to leave you, my sweet one, and these flowers, and to go and do a week's stowing in the black and rankly smelling hold of a ship, and then to sail away and perhaps be drowned—to be set wrestling and choking in the dark hollow of a big sea, and to sink down into the silence beneath, leaving of all my life nothing but a few bubbles on the surface of the water, to be probed at as a monster by the cold snouts of fish, the like of which mortal eye may never have beheld; whilst you, my darling, having prayed God to watch over and protect me, creep into your white bed, where you lie for a long hour in the quiet night thinking of me, wondering what I am doing and if my thoughts are with you, and trying to image the ship standing upright in the calm—for if it is calm with you, how, my innocent one, shall you imagine the tempest raging elsewhere?—and the pale sails motionless as clouds, with the stars gleaming among them, until your eyes close, and your dear lips murmur my name, and your soft breast heaves gently and regularly in sleep!"

Bah! thought I, Master Will, enough of this: and I was about to quit the window, and the room too, when, very greatly to my surprise, I heard Nelly singing in the garden; and, screwing my head round the looking-glass to get a sight of her, sure enough there she was,

with a big pair of scissors in her hand, cutting flowers, her head hidden in a wide straw hat.

Singing! thought I; on this day of all days! cutting flowers with a holiday air!

“Oh, a jolly sailor’s life is a merry, merry life,
And a very merry man ought he to be.”

Here she paused, whilst she looked around her for a suitable flower.

“When he’s tired of the shore, he need only kiss his wife,
Pick his bundle up and run away to sea.
Tol de rol.”

Here she made another pause, and I could almost have persuaded myself that she knew I was listening, and wanted to give me time to digest the meaning of her words.

“But it’s O heigho for the merry sailor’s wife,
For a very merry, faithless man is he:
To be married to a very merry sailor all my life
Is a merry life that wouldn’t quite suit me.
Tol de rol.”

She had scarcely finished this choice song, as old Izaak Walton might say, when I heard the councillor’s daughter, Phoebe, call out to her, “Is Will down yet, Helen? Breakfast will be ready in a few moments.” On which Nelly made a movement; but before she could look up at my window, I had got sternway on me, for I had no mind just then to let her know that I had been watching and listening to her.

“Will, are you in your room?” she called out; but I gave her no answer.

I could not understand her singing and picking flowers and going about with her happy airs that morn-

ing. Though it might be all forced, it was still no good; for I was miserable enough myself, and felt that she ought to be more miserable than I. She struck up again in a minute, but this time more faintly; and, being now dressed, I went downstairs.

Phœbe Johnson was in the breakfast-room, playing with a kitten in the sunshine that lay upon the carpet, and that streamed in through the open glass door or French window which led into the garden where Nelly was picking flowers. The councillor had not yet made his appearance. Phœbe was a broad-backed, deep-bosomed woman about thirty years old, with a pretty face and red hair. She did as much for her father as three generations of women could have done; she was not only his daughter, but she quarrelled with him as viciously as if she had been his wife, and molly-coddled him as if she had been his mother, and corrected him to his face and boasted about him behind his back as if she had been his grandmother. I used to be rather fond of kissing this girl when I first knew her, and I think she liked it, and there was a time when I believed I was in love with her; but I ceased to have any nonsense with her after I met Nelly, and she let me go with as little concern as she would a cat that sprung from her lap after she had been nursing it a bit.

"Good morning, Phib," said I, for that was my name for her. "I'm glad to think that Nelly can sing this morning. For my part, I feel as sorrowful as a bear floating out to sea on a piece of ice." As I said this, I glanced in the direction of my sweetheart, who had gone some little distance away, and was at work with her scissors over a bed of mignonette.

"And why shouldn't she sing, my sweetest William?" replied Phoebe, with an air of exasperating indifference. "The longer she can carry her cheerfulness the shorter time she will have to fret over your absence, my dear."

"True," said I; "but still, this is my last morning but one. Half an hour later to-morrow morning I shall be saying good-bye, outward bound, my darling, a whole year and more away; and though I am glad to hear her singing," said I, scowling in my effort to keep to windward of my vexation and wonder, "yet I can't help thinking it would be more natural—I am speaking of her as my sweetheart, ducky—if she showed the same sort of colours I'm flying. I don't want her to cry—to pipe her eye, Phib, but—— Not a word more, if you please. Here she comes."

Phib laughed, and pitched the kitten on to a sofa and went to the other end of the room as Nelly came in. Her hat, which was as big as a plantation-overseer's, kept me clear of her face when I stepped up to her, though I never made any scruple of kissing her morning and night before Phib and her father. She put the flowers upon the table and took off her hat, looking at me wistfully, as though she guessed some of my thoughts.

She was a woman, I think, every man would have admired; of the right height, her figure a graceful and beautiful one, and so active, strong, and lovely in its movements that, I used to tell her, with a little training, she would be a match for the most expert of the theatrical flying women—the people who walk on ropes and hang by their eyelids to ceilings. She had magnificent hair, "an excellent thing in woman," a sort of

bronzed-brown (to give you some notion of it); and I never knew how much she had of it before one morning when I accidentally plumped up against her as she was crossing from her own to Phib's bed-room, with her hair all loose and covering her like a sea-wave. She plunged away from me under it with a glorious free movement, but shut Phib's door so quickly upon herself that the hind part of her hair, streaming out as she ran, got jammed, and I had to open the door to free her. Many people thought Phib's face prettier than Nelly's, but they were all women who thought so, and women are never honest in opinions of this kind; any way, I liked my own taste best. Her grey eyes and low forehead and little ears, with a lovely curve down the cheek to a throat as soft and white as the breast of a rabbit, were things I have never yet seen matched; and though her mouth might have been a wee bit large it was full of little white teeth, and every kiss—— But this is parish talk.

"Will doesn't like to hear you singing, my dear," sung out Phib, quietly. "Men never know what they ought to like, do they, Nelly?"

Well, thought I, that's the truth, anyhow. But neither Nelly nor I appeared to take notice of the remark; she smiled a little, and looked at me quickly—indeed, her manner was altogether puzzling.

The old councillor now came in, and we sat down to breakfast. He was a dried-up old man, with a dusty face, and he wore a white hat all the year round, as well as coloured linen; so he had other pretensions to local fame than those which grew out of his town-councillorship and his acidulated letters to the papers. He was generally garrulous at meal-times,

and between him and his daughter the stiffest arguments would rage; for I have noticed that your people who are pretty well agreed are always the fiercest argufiers. This morning, however, the councillor was unusually silent; I believe my going had something to do with it. Phib asked me what made *me* so dull—a mere excuse to tell her father that I had been annoyed to hear Nell singing in the garden.

"Look here, my dear," said I, "enough's as good as a feast. Don't you overtalk yourself sometimes? Perhaps I am fretting because I have to leave you."

"You were once sweethearts, weren't you?" said Nelly, demurely.

"Would you like to take me with you, Will?" asked Phib. "What would you do with me on board a ship?"

"Perhaps make a figure-head of you," I answered: "and very fine you'd look."

"You have made up your mind not to run down and see us before you sail, Will?" said the councillor.

"Why, Mr. Johnson, I think it's best to make one good-bye do for all. Handshaking and God-bless-you-ing is no joke to a fellow when he's leaving what he loves—perhaps for ever," said I, feeling a lump in my throat. Here Nelly put a spoon into her cup and peered into it close.

"I hope we *shall* meet again, my boy," said the old man, gloomily; "though a year is a longer time for me to look ahead than it is for you, who have nearly forty years to serve to come to my age. And though you are going to sea, which is reckoned by us people ashore but a perilous life at the best, I don't suppose there's a man living who would not bet heavily

on the chances of your coming back to look at the old place once more, as against the chances of my being alive to welcome you."

He seemed really affected, and Phib was now looking as grave as a nun at her prayers. Nell, with her cheek in her hand—like a peach in the cup of a lily—gazed at the old councillor wistfully: there *was* a tear in her eye, but it was as puzzling to me as all the rest of her conduct, for she seemed to be thinking more of Mr. Johnson than of me—if, indeed, she was thinking of me at all.

But my story does not lie at this breakfast-table, nor in Councillor Johnson's house. So let me clap on a bit of extra canvas and claw off this shore, for I am afraid I'm too much of a sailor to feel happy in land-togs, and the sooner I can get you to sea the more comfortable I shall feel.

Nelly did not sing again that day—at least, I didn't catch her singing; but neither during the morning nor in the afternoon did she give me half as much of her company as I wanted. She seemed to have made a lover of old Johnson, for she kept on making excuses to be with him, and her manner to him was so gentle and loving and sad, that I never saw the like of it before in her. It was too hot all that day to leave the house, but when the sun was low, and the hush and softness of the early evening had fallen, I asked Nelly to come with me for a row on the river, "for the last time," and without a word she went for her hat, passed her hand through my arm, and we walked slowly down the lanes to the old boat-house.

The last impression a man takes of his home before he goes on a long journey is nearly always the

one that lives, and that comes to him in intervals of silence and thought when he is far away. Many a time since, in the lonely night-watches at sea, has this town of Burmarsh and the country around it, as they appeared that evening under the long crimson lines flowing from the west, whilst in the east loomed a bank of slate-coloured clouds with golden outlines, against which the delicate rose-tinted hills stood out, arisen before my eyes with something more than the vividness of memory. I have been ashore in many lands and seen nature in many shapes of beauty, but I have never beheld anything comparable to an English country scene on a summer evening, just when the sun has waxed low enough to let one or two large stars shine forth, and when the green of the trees grows dark against the deepening blue of the sky, and when the pelting day-chorus of the birds is over and only a few melodious notes speak here and there, and when the brown frog comes out from under the hedge and leaps athwart the dust of the road, and when little shrill twitterings arise from the grass around, whilst the arms of the windmill are at rest, and only the top windows of the higher houses are aflame with the sunset, and the gathering of the peace of the night is beheld like a presence in the east and can almost be watched, so to say, coming along with the shadows.

There were a couple of boats lying along-side the banks of the river. We got into one of them, and the man that owned her cast us adrift, and I rowed for about half a mile, until we were well in the country away from the town, when I threw one oar inboard, and took the other aft with which I steered the boat, through the aftermost rowlock, with a light movement

of my wrist almost unnoticed by myself. By this means I kept the boat in mid-stream, and we drifted down with the current, which ran here at about half a mile an hour, whilst I sat close against my sweetheart in the stern-sheets.

It was a calm and beautiful evening; the sun was gone now, but all the sky was ablaze in the west, and the moon was in the south ready to throw its light down when the crimson had faded; the cows were lowing impatiently in the meadows, but otherwise there was a great silence abroad, and only now and again would we catch sight of a man, some village labourer, his head and shoulders visible over the tops of the cornfields, or trudging along the road that skirted the river at a distance of a couple of hundred feet. All about here the river lay quite open to the sky, the fields flat and the country treeless, though half an hour's steady rowing would have brought us to some lovely scenes: but the river twisted like a corkscrew, and every turn found the water of a new complexion—now a kind of lustrous ash-colour; now dark and gleaming, with the faint moon languishing in it; again, as it veered to the west, catching the blood-red light of the sky in that quarter, and then a dark blue, in imitation of the northern heaven.

We sat as sweethearts should, both together; my right arm was around her waist, and with the other hand I held the oar. She, the better to sit close to me, removed her hat, and as she often laid her head upon my shoulder, and had her ear close to my mouth, we conversed in such low voices that we should have been inaudible to any person sitting forward in the boat. The wonder that had troubled me that morning

when I heard her singing, and watched her gaily picking the flowers, was gone now. She smiled when I recurred to it, and drew away from me to let me look into her eyes, as if she preferred that I should find out the truth for myself in that mirror which she held up to me, sooner than that she should speak about it. I felt that I had made too much of her singing, though still, and even in this time, I seemed to miss in her manner something that I cannot define, but that I felt ought to be there.

Perhaps if ever I had a right to be jealous of her at all, it was then; for in a very few hours now I should be parting from her for a long year, and such was my love, that I felt the only thing that would make our separation bearable would be the power of thinking that she was as true as a compass to me, and that I might be sure her heart and prayers were with me wherever I might be, and that, though thousands of miles divided us, she could not be more truly mine than were she my wife and by my side. Hence, if I thought of her and watched her critically on this eve of my departure, you will think me excused; besides, who can truly love without jealousy? what sunbeam but has its shadow? I believe she felt that her manner was wanting, and she tried to mend it by caresses; but, though her sadness at times equalled mine, I felt, as I had been made to feel throughout the day, that its inspiration was not altogether owing to me. I noticed tears in her eyes when we were speaking of Phoebe and the councillor, and she owned that it made her cry to think of them.

“But why, Nelly, do you cry for *them*?” I asked.

"Is anything going to happen? One would think that *they* were going away to sea."

"I am a silly girl, Will," she answered, drying her eyes; and she took my hand in both hers and pressed it passionately to her breast, and immediately buried her face and sobbed bitterly for some moments. I kissed her once or twice, but let her have her cry out without offering to speak. This sorrow I felt I could claim for myself; for the way she seized my hand made me feel that I was the object of it; so I began to cheer her as well as I could.

"A year is a long time to look forward to, Nelly, but a short time to look back upon. It seems but yesterday that I said good-bye to you when I went away on my last voyage."

"Yes, it will pass, Will; and I hope God will spare us both, darling, to witness the end of it, and be together safe."

"Ay, we must hope that indeed, and pray for it too. But I shall leave you full of brave hopes. I am pretty sure of getting a chief-mate's berth next voyage, and we shall marry upon it, Nelly, and make an end of this waiting." And I talked again of the schemes we had repeated to each other, and got her to smile; but this cheering her up was desperate hard work to me, who was the more miserable of the two, as I now know. It was like sailing two knots against a three-knot tide; it was making headway through the water, but sternway over the ground, and I gave it up at last for fear of breaking down altogether, and chucked the oars into the rowlocks, and rowed away back to the boat-house.

We had the moon with us now, and in bends of

the river the water lay in sheets of silver. The sky was full of yellow stars, and in this light the face of Nelly looked phantom-like. I could scarcely remove my eyes from it; it seemed unreal, like a memory, as if she had been here but was now gone, and her face there was only my imagination. On either hand the land loomed away in a white mist; the dip of the oars was the only sound, unless now and again the *cheep* of the stream as it met and half-circled the trunk of some tree whose roots were beneath the water line. We exchanged but few words: my heart was too full for speech; it gave me pain to articulate; and Nelly sat quite still, with her gaze fixed on the water, and sometimes, when the bend of the river brought the moon broad upon her, I could see the tears sparkling in her eyes. Anon we reached the landing-stage; I lifted her out of the boat, and we walked slowly in the direction of home.

CHAPTER II.

DOWN THE RIVER.

THE *Waldershare* was a full-rigged ship of eight hundred and fifty tons, but looked smaller than this figure of her tonnage suggests. She had been built and originally owned in Aberdeen, but her owner having joined the firm to which the *Waldershare* now belonged, he had brought his ship with him, and the word "London" was painted on her stern. The Scotch are the best shipbuilders in the world, and the *Waldershare* was always admired as a beautiful specimen of the skill of their yards. When I first saw her she was in dock, lying close against the wall, her decks forward

covered with raffle, and a litter of dirt and goods amidships. The ships ahead and astern of her also helped to muddle her lines; and yet she looked, with only the run of her bulwarks visible, and her beautifully rounded stern, and her top-gallant forecastle narrowing like the bows of a yacht, with the same clever curve and gradual sweep which talks of speed to the eye, the handsomest vessel of her kind then in the docks, and a ship for a sailor to love as he would a sweetheart. She was coppered to the bends, and painted green fore and aft with a narrow white streak; her stern was elliptical, and in the graceful bend of it was a broad gilt scroll, in the midst of which was written her name and that of her port in small white letters. Her figure-head was a gilt dolphin, the tail flemish-coiled, and it overhung a stem as sharp as a knife, sweeping out and around in real racing lines. She was heavily sparred—too heavily, I always thought; her lower masts were as bright as mahogany, and the sun streaked them with fire; her fore and main yards were huge spars, and promised an immense spread of canvas; she carried single topsails, and reefs in the fore and main top-gallant sails, and short royal-mast heads, which, with her heavy tops, gave her a man-of-war look. Her decks were full of brass-work—brass rail across the break of the poop, brass handrails to the poop ladders, brass stanchions for the life-ropes, brass gratings over the skylights, brass binnacles, brass belaying-pins for the mizzen rigging, and even the pump just abaft the mizzen-mast, that was used for washing the poop down, was crowned with brass, so that I reckoned, when I saw all this, the youngsters would have their hands full.

The tide serving at half-past two, we got clear of the docks at that hour on Thursday, the 26th of June, 1858. The day was a bright one and hot enough, with a fresh breeze blowing straight up the river. The ship was now in very different trim from that she had been in when I boarded her a week before. Her decks were as white as holystoning could bring them; the brass-work just made them a broad glare of light in the brilliant sunshine; aloft every bunt was as smooth as a pillow, all the running gear hauled taut, the standing rigging like wire, and the whole ship a beautiful picture. A crowd of idlers cheered us as we went out, and in a few minutes the tug had got us into mid-stream, and the noble ship was gliding down the river, one of the stateliest fabrics which ever swam upon it.

Now that we were out of the docks there was little to be done; there were two hands at the wheel, and most of the men forward on the forecastle watching the shore as it slipped past us. This going down the river is the most melancholy part of the voyage out to men who make any trouble of leaving home. The scenes which one passes are so familiar, that, as one by one they drop astern or vanish round the bends of the river, a new wrench is given to the heart. You look at the clustered houses, and at the wharves with the black old billboys squatting alongside; the cranes slowly rising, or dropping ponderous burdens at the end of massive chains! at the people stopping their work to gaze at your ship as she passes by; at the wherry bobbing in the swell left by the paddles of the tug, with its solitary occupant who drops his breast upon his oars to remove his hat and wave it; at the

green fields away over the slimy river-banks and the dim country beyond them; and if sorrow is to be felt by you at all, it will be felt now, as one by one these scenes die out in the distance, and every yard of the soil that goes past deepens the sense that good-bye has been said indeed, and that England—the old beloved home—will soon be behind the great ocean towards which your brave ship is steering.

And yet, on such a day as this was and amid such a scene, the most despondent mind must have found something in the general freshness and beauty to lift it up. The river was unusually full of all sorts and descriptions of vessels. Now a huge screw, with her bows as tall as a hill and her propeller half out of the water, churning up a little mountain of foam, would pass us; then it would be a ship in tow, going up the river, deep in the water, her sides worn with the struggles of a long voyage, her sails clumsily furled, her anchors rusty, and her crew with their heads over the bulwarks pointing out the places ashore; or a crazy old collier squelching along under squared yards, with her greasy sails fitting her as prettily as a boy's clothes would a man—a red nightcap at the galley door, a grinning boy, with his face as black as a nigger's astride of the jibboom, and a man at the crazy little wheel, looking first up and then down, and up and down again, and so on, up and down, as though he were a machine with all the works in his neck. Or a fast steamer, bound for some French, or Irish, or north-country port would pass us, the skipper on the bridge, a crowd of passengers aft, who would stare at us through glasses and sometimes wave a hat or a handkerchief. When we were abreast of

Greenwich, a Gravesend pleasure-boat came up with us hand over fist, densely crowded with passengers, and a band of music on a sort of midship platform. The captain of her wishing, I suppose, to give his patrons the benefit of all the sights which came in his way, sheered his vessel to port, which brought her rather alarmingly close to us; so much so that I thought he would have been into us, and sprang aft to tell him to mind his helm; but he steadied in time, and went seething past, the band striking up "Hearts of Oak"—a strain which our men seemed very much to relish, for they cheered the steamer and yelled out answers to her passengers; and so the gay little vessel rushed ahead, every creature on board, even the little children, waving hat or hand or handkerchief: but for some moments we were nearly suffocated with the smoke from her funnels.

The grandeur of the Thames lies in its wealth of human interests; yet as a river it is one of the noblest, and if it flowed anywhere but in England, Englishmen would never be weary of praising it. I had passed up and down it many times before, but though there was much to cloud my mind and dull the edge of enjoyment, it had never more impressed me nor filled me with greater pride than on this day. The sunshine was broad and searching, and all the various colours of the scene were extremely vivid and the contrasts very sharp. Off Woolwich seemed to me the finest part of this gay show, for just at this point a great number of passing vessels came by chance together, and the river was covered by a whole fleet of ships big and little, amid which some steamers plied cautiously, sometimes backing and then forging ahead,

whilst from one vessel to another shouts were re-echoed, and yards were boxed about and the men went springing here and there like kangaroos. The breeze was very fresh and the water rough with it, and the dance of the sun in the river was almost blinding; the little vessels upward bound had it all their own way, and pushed along with a heap of snow at their fore feet; but there was a number of colliers, hoys, barges, and vessels of that kind beating down, and as they ratched from shore to shore, slueing on their heels to run athwart the wind on another tack, it looked like a quadrille or country-dance of ships, and there was quite as much dignity and stateliness and bowing as the vessels filled and bent over as was wanted to furnish out the image. Shortly after he had passed Greenhithe, a crazy old brig, with a boom fore-sail and stump top-gallant masts, and sails as full of holes as a beggar's professional suit, came swirling around and plumped into a taut little barque that was beating cautiously down under topsails. The collision hove the barque up into the wind, the brig came round, and in a minute there they lay locked, as if they had got grappling-irons on board one another, grinding against each other's side, resembling two alley wenches grabbing at each other's hair and pounding with their fists. The brig's jibboom snapped off as though it had been a carrot; then after some wild buckling down came the slender fore top-gallant mast of the barque with all its hamper of sails and gear; immediately after the two old-fashioned starboard channels of the brig were ground off as neatly as the top of an egg sliced by a knife, and there the vessels, lay, a couple of wrecks. By this time we had come

abreast of them, and the confusion on their decks was something to remember. Some of the men were rolling about like casks over the raffle; others had shrunk right aft to be clear of the spars which were tumbling forward; the swearing and fist-shaking were triumphs of maritime art in this particular branch of the profession. However, the damage done was nearly all aloft, the barque being the worst sufferer, and already there was a small fleet of boats putting off, whilst a tug steered straight for the unfortunate vessels, so that what we had seen was evidently the worst of a bad job.

It was generally understood that we were to bring up off Gravesend in order to ship a few passengers. When Gravesend hove in sight orders were given to see the chain cable all clear for running, and when we were abreast of the town the tug let fall our tow-rope, and after we had swum a few minutes the anchor was let go, the cable roared through the hawse-hole, and the ship swung with her stern down the river. So here we were holding on tight again to English ground.

The captain went ashore, the river pilot and the custom-house officers going along with him, and the ship was left in the charge of the chief officer. The decks were soon cleared, everything made snug and ready, an anchor watch set, and the hands went below. My share of the work being done, I came aft, where I found the chief mate—a little red-haired Welshman, Thomas by name, the smallest man I was ever shipmates with. When I had first seen him I could scarcely keep from laughing, for his dress was as odd as his body was little: consisting of very wide

blue cloth trousers, which held the wind as the skin of a sausage holds its meat, and made his legs look like bolsters; brown velvet waistcoat with gilt buttons, over which lay the bight of a stout gold chain; a red silk handkerchief with fly-away ends, which were always over his shoulders; blue linen, and a cloth cap with a broad peak, along the scuppers of which was rove half a foot of gold lace. He had little quick blue eyes, which played in their sockets like a ball on the top of a jet of water, a bush of red hair under his chin, and long red eyebrows which he could have soaped into points, had he chosen, as a Frenchman does his moustache. He was a regular little nautical dandy, but by this time I had got used to his rig and appearance and was well disposed to like him, for I could see that he had immediately taken a fancy to me, and though I had not as yet had any opportunity of judging him as a seaman, I had found him very smart and sensible in dock. He told me he had a captain's certificate, but could not get a berth; this was his second voyage as chief mate of the *Walder-share*, but his first with Captain Flanders, the man who now commanded her.

I found him gazing gloomily at the shore, in which occupation I was quite ready to join him. Now that the bustle of bringing up was over, and the ship at rest, and the shifting interests of the river gone, my heart fell heavy in me again, and my thoughts went away to Burmarsh, and Nelly, and the happy, loving hours I had spent and which were now over. Mr. Thomas was sitting on the aftermost sky-light, his little feet well above the deck, and was rubbing his nose down with a sad look on his little face.

"Well, Mr. Lee, here we are, sir," he said; "old England broad on both beams, though the old hooker ought to be going the road she's pointing to to please me. I hope it may be well with us all, Mr. Lee; though, damme, sir, no man could have the cheek to pray for a better ship under him than the *Walder-share*; I never heard of such a run as she has. Follow the curve of her to the eyes, sir: she's like a dream, something too fine for mortal hands." He pointed forward with his chin, like a negro, still rubbing his nose.

"Ay, she's a beauty, Mr. Thomas; but, as you say, she's bound the wrong way, and lovely as she is, I'd rather be aboard of that old *Geordie* there who's making a fair wind of it home."

"And so would I, Mr. Lee—more than you, perhaps; for I dare say your hankering is only after a few knockabout pleasures. But I'm leaving a wife, and a wife is a solemn thing to leave for a spell, long or short."

"I am with you there, sir," said I, with a warmth that made him lift his eyes to my face.

"Why, are *you* married?" he inquired.

I told him I was not, but that I was as good as married, for that my sweetheart and I were pledged to each other, and that if she was not yet my wife in the law, she was so in my love, and that parting from her this time was the cruellest necessity that had ever been forced upon me since I was old enough to recollect.

He listened attentively, rubbing his nose all the time, and then exclaimed, "Well, I suppose I'm not the only man who has to leave his wife. I dare say, now, there are a dozen fellows forward who are leav-

ing wives, and children too. I've only been married a month, and marriage when it's fresh is like a new cement, that makes the pieces united pretty hard to come apart, though in time, faith, they'll fall of themselves." He coughed dryly, and burying his hands in his pockets, said, "But I've left her snug enough, in three good rooms with brand-new furniture, and all my savings ever since I went to sea, in her name at the bank. She has her sister to keep her company, and as time flies more quickly than people reckon who count forwards, I don't know that there is much to blubber over."

So saying, he jerked himself on to the deck as though he had done with that subject. I spoke to him about Captain Flanders, and asked if he knew anything about him.

"Not very much," he answered. "Only I can tell you what an old shipmate of mine told me when he heard that Captain Flanders was appointed to the *Waldershare*—though, mind, I don't believe it—that there's madness in his family on his father's side; that his father hung himself; and one of his brothers, who was in the Church, used to make nothing of changing his clothes with a beggar in the public street in broad daylight, shifting himself down to his very breeks, and that he dropped preaching at last because he thought the devil always got into the pulpit with him: but what became of him my friend didn't tell me. I can't say whether there's much religion in the skipper or not. He has a rather monkish eye. I hear he got command of this ship through the influence of the gentleman to whom she originally belonged. It should have been my post by rights," he said, bitterly, beginning to pace the deck.

We stumped the length of the poop together for a half-hour, talking on the prospects of the voyage, the time it would take us, our several experiences of doubling the Horn, Callao (to which port we were bound direct), and so forth. By this time most of the men had come on deck again, and were clustered on the forecastle. I believe the size of the chief mate amused them, for I caught them looking our way pretty often, with a broad grin; but Mr. Thomas took no notice—indeed, in all the time I was thrown with him I never discovered that he had the least sense of his smallness, or fancied himself other than of a stout and prepossessing figure. My own height was not above five feet nine, yet I felt myself a giant alongside of him; and for every stride of mine he had to take four, so that his little feet, cased in varnished leather boots, regularly twinkled as we walked. However, in this half-hour we greatly improved our good opinion of one another; I found him an honest, simple, manly little fellow, with clear, sharp views and a brisk capacity of words, candid to excess, and a man who had been to sea a long while and sailed in many kinds of ships. This was a very good beginning. To be associated with a mate I could like, and who was evidently willing to leave it to me to distinguish and appreciate the difference between our relative posts, was a great gain to me; and if the skipper was only half as good a fellow as his chief mate, the voyage would be a comfortable one, so far as the work aft was concerned.

Our crew was a large one for a ship of the size of the *Waldershare*, even in those days when a ship's complement was assessed on a very different scale from that we now hear of. We had thirty-three able and

ordinary seamen, including a boatswain and two mates; and six idlers, consisting of a steward, cook, cook's mate, carpenter, carpenter's mate, and butcher: so that a cry of "all hands" would fill the decks with thirty-nine hands, whereof five only were boys, and this without counting the mates. However, it afterwards turned out that no less than nine of the hands were what are called "shilling a monthers;" that is, men who had shipped merely for the voyage out for the nominal pay of a shilling a month; so, unless we took in more hands at Callao, our working strength on the homeward voyage would not equal what it was now. As it was, we had a very tolerable ship's company, and I might hope that even in a sudden gale a great deal was to be done with the watch on deck.

Such of the crew as were visible looked promising enough, as they sat smoking on the forecastle or leant upon the rail, gazing at the shore or the ships which lay at anchor near us. They were, of course, a mixed body, and the negro, conspicuous with his red shirt, broad grin, and bland eyes, was not wanting among them, you may be sure; there were also several Danes, Norwegians, and Americans—these latter very active rascals—and two or three south-countrymen, Italianos, and a sprinkling of black-browed scowbanks from Mediterranean ports; but the English preponderated, and on the whole we had a good and plentiful crew.

Our cargo consisted chiefly of hardware, railway metals, brass, iron, and other metal goods; a heavy cargo, which might give the ship a little too much stability by making her too deep. The *Waldershare* was not a passenger ship, that is, a liner; but she had accommodation for a dozen cuddy passengers, and

three of her cabins were let and the luggage of the people in them, and the people were to be on board next day. I did not know who the passengers were, nor their names, but Mr. Thomas said that two of them were women. I told him I regretted that there were any passengers at all, as they generally gave a good deal of trouble, were always about, and were a kind of hindrance to the freedom of the cuddy. Mr. Thomas agreed with me, though, as a sea dandy, I dare say he was not sorry in his heart that there were to be women among us to admire his little feet and pretty clothes.

The weather still held beautifully fine, with as rich a coloured sky overhead as ever I had seen in the tropics or in the Pacific. The chief mate and I dined alone; the captain was still ashore, and there was some doubt whether he would come aboard again that night. The *Waldershare's* cuddy was a short one, and extended but a few feet before the mizzen-mast; but what there was of it was very handsome: all the panelling painted white, with gold lines; the mizzen-mast that pierced it, and to which one end of the table was affixed, wreathed about with carved oak foliage, and the whole place looking more like a little drawing-room than a ship's cabin. My berth was on the starboard side, just under the poop ladder, and the window of it looked on to the quarter-deck; Mr. Thomas's was the corresponding cabin on the port side; the captain's berth was right aft, under the wheel; and between, on either hand, were the passenger's cabins and the steward's pantry.

After dinner I went on deck again, carrying my pipe with me, and left Mr. Thomas below. I was not

sorry to be quit of him for a spell; he had more to say about his wife and home arrangements than interested me, and I wanted to think over what I was leaving, and to be alone for a bit. I perched myself on a hencoop, and lighted my pipe and looked around me.

The wind had dropped, and the current had swung the ship with her head up the river. The sun was setting over the port bow, and Gravesend lay red in its light, the windows burning, and the whole town looked massive and heavy in the glow which magnified it. This red light was on the river too, veining the masts of the vessels at anchor with lances of fire, and filling the air with a purple haze, amid which every rope glanced with the glint of a spider's web, while the canvas lay upon the black yards as though a storm of snow had fallen and lined them; and the brass-work was filled with ruby-coloured stars; and the glass in the port-holes notched cones of quivering light in the running water, that grew dark as it swept broadening down the river, and gradually glassing its surface as the wind grew fainter with the sinking of the sun, until there was not a breath of air perceptible even to the moistened finger; and the sounds from the shore came floating through the motionless atmosphere with a muffled tone, with the rattle of a winch on board a near ship, or the wail of a concertina, and the gurgling of the tide as it chattered round the rudder just under me, and went twisting in little holes away, giving to the eye the idea that we were moving.

There was a large American ship at anchor about three cables' length abreast of us; a big, black, soft-wood built ship, with skysail yards crossed, and long, slender whips of masts stayed aft. When the moon

threw down her light, this vessel grew into a very solemn object—looming, dark, soundless, with her masts-heads searching the stars. I was looking at her, and wondering where her crew was stowed away, as I had never once noticed a human being aboard of her, when I suddenly saw a pale object fall from her forecastle, whiz down her huge black bow, and strike the water with a loud splash. There is a kind of *softness* in the splash of a human body upon the water which never deceives the ear that has once heard it, and I sprang to my feet to give the alarm: but before I could sing out, a powerful voice on board the American shouted, "Man overboard!" And then might have been witnessed a sample of Yankee smartness. In an instant half a dozen lights flashed about her, a swarm of men bounded aft, the port quarter-boat with four hands in her dropped from the davits, the blocks squealed as the falls were overhauled, and then followed the regular grind of oars in thole pins; in a few seconds the boat was some distance astern of the ship. The whole business had not occupied three minutes, and no job was ever more smartly rushed on board a man-of-war. I awaited the result with breathless expectation. Brilliant as the moonlight was, it only enabled me to discern the outline of the boat on the dark water; I could see her dodging here and there, sometimes stationary, but gradually receding further and further, until she must have wandered out of ear-shot, for twice a strong nasal voice hailed her, but no answer came back. After twenty minutes, I made out the boat pulling up the river: she came sweeping along, the moonlight glittering in the foam under her, and some one on board the American sang out—

"Have you got him?"

"No, sir: we can't see him anywhere! He has sunk, for we followed dead in his wake, and we must have seen him had he been afloat."

They got the boat alongside, hooked on the falls, in a few seconds the boat hung at the davits again, and the great ship loomed black and silent. Such is the life of a sailor! He drops into a nameless grave, and no one knows whose child he is, or if there is ever a heart that will ache over his long absence.

This little incident depressed me greatly, and to rally myself I took several turns along the poop. Our own ship lay like a vision on the breathless surface of the noble river. The moon was now asserting her full power, and had flung a haze on the air, and everything looked unreal and unsubstantial in it. Occasionally a steamer would pass; but long before she hove in sight, you might hear the throb of her engines like the pulse of a running giant. Her coloured lights brightening upon the dark water, the smoke pouring along the stars, the water crackling under her stem like rotten brushwood under the foot, her illuminated port-holes giving her the look of a marine monster full of eyes, the dusky figures upon her bridge, the *scoop, scoop* of the screw, or the rhythmic beat of the paddles, were all incidents of one of those spectacles of which no familiarity can moderate the beauty. Or presently oozing out of the further darkness would drift a barge with sails as motionless as carven wood, her skipper resolute to "hold on all" with the tide and take as much headway as he could get out of that sort of navigation; she would float through the gloom like a phantom until she reached the belt of moonlight on

the water, when what was black of her would turn a deep indigo, and what was white silver, and so she would pass away. Gravesend was a galaxy of lights, but the shores on either side of it and across the river stretched away silent and pale, and the moan and fret of the current under the counter made the imagination find the flat and ashen land very desolate and sad-looking. There were voices singing in some of the ships around us, and here a fiddle was scraping and there a concertina tuning up: our own ship and the big black Yankee next us were the only silent ones, but our being outward bound would account for the quietness of the men. Many of them still hung about the forecastle, and some few talked in low voices in the waist; a light in the boatswain's berth on the port side of the forecastle streamed across the deck, and illuminated the lower part of the foremast, and threw into relief the huge spare booms piled atop of the long boat and the range of chain cable and coils of running rigging; but on either side this light the darkness was profound, for the high bulwark intercepted the moonlight and threw a deep shadow.

All this while, though my eye noticed the matters I have here set down, my mind was running on my sweetheart, and at one time so heavy a fit of depression came over me that I could scarcely contain myself, and was almost thankful when Mr. Thomas came on deck and joined me, as his presence obliged me to act a part, and so I gradually rallied. We lingered on deck until the steward came to say that the grog was on the cuddy table, after which I went the rounds of the ship to see that all was right, and then turned in.

CHAPTER III.

A FOG IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL.

NEXT morning was fine, with a strong north-westerly wind, which, however, did not promise to last. The captain was on deck when I turned out, and I heard that he had come on board late the preceding night. There was nothing to be done until we had shipped our passengers and the tug was alongside. All the ships which had been anchored near us last night were gone, and the river was full of vessels making the most of this stout breeze, and sweeping past us in processions. I breakfasted with the captain and Mr. Thomas at half-past eight, and this was the first time I had sat at table with Captain Flanders. After what the chief mate had told me, I took some interest in watching him, the better to form an opinion for myself, and learn, if I could, from his face and talk something of his character, that I might have my cue. He was certainly a very odd-looking man, with a long face and peaked forehead, his head, indeed, as nearly resembling an egg as anything could well be; large, dark, gloomy eyes, sunk deep in their sockets, and overhung with coarse iron-grey eye-brows; his nose was a handsome one, an aquiline, and it made him look like a lord, it gave him a fine patrician air; he had no hair on his face; his lips were thin and pale; he was taller than I, but without breadth, and by the fling of his trousers as he walked and the cut of his wrists, I guessed he was little more than a skeleton. Nature had exhausted herself in producing his nose. He had been to sea all his life, but never was there a man who looked

less like a sailor than he. Indeed, he had the air of a lawyer; I say a lawyer, but any calling would do that kept a man out of the sun, and shut him up with papers and cobwebs and smoke for twelve hours in every day.

He was civil enough to us both, talked of the voyage, the trim of the ship, asked questions of Mr. Thomas about her qualities, and told us about the passengers; that one was an invalid lady bent on doubling the Horn, to see what that would do for her; that the others were a Spanish merchant and his wife, who was an Englishwoman; and the fourth a Scotch engineer, who had got some railway job to carry out at Lima. On this occasion I cannot say that I noticed anything odd in his manner; he talked like a gentleman—I mean he used good words, and delivered them with that clean, easy articulation which the best education—so I have noticed—will not qualify a man of inferior birth to arrive at. His dress was strictly a landsman's: cutaway coat, old-fashioned stock and pin, and tall hat. So far all seemed well with him, and as he came from a religious stock, and gave himself no sea-air, I might suppose he would give the crew only good words.

A little before one the tug came alongside, and the news went along that the passengers were coming off the shore with the pilot. The order was now given to man the windlass. All hands tailed on, and the clank of the windlass was like the sound of a giant's hammer on a forge; and this was the only sound, until suddenly a hoarse voice broke into a song, and there sprang out of thirty throats a hurricane-chorus that might have awakened the echoes of the distant

hills. Then followed a number of orders in rapid succession: "Get the outer jib loosed ready for hoisting!" "A hand aft here to the wheel!" "Look out there for that line from the tug!" "Bring the gangway steps along here and bear a hand!" The end of a line cleverly flung from the tug pitched on to the forecastle; the ponderous tow-rope was bent on to it and paid out overboard. There was a little crowd of persons round the gangway to receive the passengers, and hand up what odds and ends of parcels and luggage they had brought off with them; but having gone forward just then, and happening to stand in the very eyes of the ship, I could see but little of what was doing on the quarter-deck, and scarcely caught a glimpse of Captain Flanders leading a thickly veiled lady into the cuddy, followed by another lady leaning on the arm of a gentleman, behind whom stalked the fourth and last passenger.

The pilot was now on the forecastle—a short, thick-set man, in a rough coat that reached below his knees, a fur cap, and a white wool shawl round his throat.

"Are you all ready?" he bawled through his hands to the tug.

"Ay, ay!"

"Man the windlass. Get your anchor up smartly, my lads!"

Once more the windlass clanked heavily and quickly, and a loud chorus broke forth.

"The anchor's off the ground, sir!"

"Starboard your helm!"

The paddles of the tug revolved, and ran a sluice of white water against the bows of the ship; the bight

of the tow-rope lifted, and the huge warp stiffened; and with the windlass clanking, and the men raising their echoing chorus, and the Union Jack at the peak and the house-flag at the main standing out like boards, the *Waldershare* glided through the water.

The fresh breeze was something to make the most of. All the fore and aft canvas was set, the yards braced up, and we went racing after the tug, catching the broad surface of foam she threw off full on our bows, and spreading it far out on either side of us. If the breeze only held, and the *Waldershare* had the sailing qualities she looked to have, we might hope to have given the English Channel our heels by Saturday morning; but already the blue of the sky was growing weak, losing its rich tone, and something of the bite was taken out of the sunshine. This looked as if the breeze was to slacken.

Everything was now snug forward, the anchor catted and fished, and the decks clear. I went to the fore-castle to give the pilot a message, and when I returned I found three of the passengers on deck talking to the captain, who, the pilot having charge, had nothing to do but walk, eat, and sleep as it pleased him.

The Spanish merchant, whose name was Espinosa, was a complete scarecrow of a man, with a hollow, gaunt, and sallow face, out of which stuck an immense hooked nose. His hair hung in ringlets about his ears, but all the lower part of his face, together with his mouth, were bushed up with a beard and moustache as black as ebony. His fingers were covered with rings, and every ring had a brilliant, and every time he moved his hands in the sunshine they flashed like the blade of a sword. His wife was a fat blonde, with a

very pale, docile face; not pretty, and yet not unpleasant. I supposed she was forty by the cut of her hull, but she was dressed like a girl of eighteen, in a smart hat and long feather, and a tight-fitting jacket that developed her run with alarming accuracy. She, too, was richly figged out with jewellery, and the gold chain round her neck was thick enough to have served as ground tackle for a thirty-ton cutter. The Scotch engineer, Mr. Black, was a broad-faced, freckled man with pale-blue eyes, but no other facial distinctions that I can remember. You could smell the snuff on him six fathoms off when he was to windward.

They all stood together aft, Madam Espinosa (as I called her) apparently very much delighted with the scene, and her husband gesticulating like a windmill.

We were now clear of the Lower Hope Reach, and heading a good east, with Thames Haven sloping past us gaily, and all to starboard the flat, desolate stretches of mud, called marshes, to which no sunshine could furnish any sort of attraction. I know what South African river mud is, and I know what Irish mud is, and I have also seen some pretty mud up the Peiho river; but for its consistence, colour, adhesiveness, and unmitigated offensiveness in all and every respect, there is nothing that ever I have seen to equal Thames mud, and particularly the mud that lines the south side of the river, off the reaches through which the *Waldershare* was now towing.

As I had expected, the breeze dropped as the sun declined, and before we were abreast of Sheerness, all the air I could feel was caused by the motion of the

ship. The water became a speckless, burnished surface, and the motionless sailing vessels which we passed were reflected in it line for line. Calm it was indeed, for now we were literally breasting the waters of the German Ocean; yet the swell that seems to haunt every sea in its repose—the placid breathing, so to speak, of the sleeping monster—was wanting here; and our flying jibboom end never lifted nor sank an inch above or below the point of the horizon towards which it curved. But already the horizon was as thick as mud, and before Sheppey was astern of us we were raising on the port bow, a long, low, defined white line, with sinuous arms, like twisted columns, forking out of it into the unwholesome blue.

Where the air came from to move this curtain of vapour I could not guess; but it was unrolling itself—just as you might run a roll of carpet along the floor—down away to the south, and it left all behind it, as it went, as thick as a feather bed. It was curious to see it swallow up the vessels it met as it pushed its way forwards. Up to the very moment of contact there would be some craft—say a little fore and aft schooner—as clean to the eye as a black and white drawing, with her white sails gleaming in the water like the wings of an albatross, and the sunshine broad upon her; then pouff! she would vanish as you extinguish an image in an soap-bubble by touching it; and meanwhile the horizon grew narrower and narrower as the tug went on towing us towards this moving continent of vapour.

The pilot kept a look-out ahead from the forecastle.

“I suppose he’ll bring up when he gets into that business,” I said to Mr. Thomas.

"Well, he's got a clear enough course round the North Foreland," he answered. "He may hold on until he nears the Goodwin unless it clears."

The sun was still shining on us, and the contrast of the fog ahead and the clear weather around us and astern was striking enough. We had long before let go the staysail halliards, and were now towing with square yards. All of a sudden I noticed the water darkening in the westward, and in about ten minutes a light breeze was blowing along the decks over our stern. The fog which stood awaiting us like a wall began to travel under this pressure, and something resembling the phenomenon of a ship advancing upon a fog, and a fog receding before a ship, was now exhibited.

"We shall get it all the same," said Mr. Thomas; "sooner or later, and sooner than later, hang it!"

The truth is, the English Channel is one of those places every sailor is glad to get quit of; nothing sets sailors growling more than having to handle their ground tackle when once the anchor is at the cathead. A fog makes a regular hurrah's nest of a ship; it is all groping and blind staring, and you are never sure that the next moment will not bring the iron bow of a steamer grinding into you. However, for the present the fog was journeying our way and making a stern chase of it, and so we might hope to round the Foreland in the sunshine, though we should find the fog waiting for us behind it.

A night-glass belonging to me was in my cabin, and I went below to fetch it, thinking I might put it to some account presently. Everybody belonging aft was on deck, as I believed; and being thirsty, I went along

the cuddy to the steward's pantry, which was a small cabin abreast of the companion steps, for a glass of sherry and water. The steward was on deck. I entered the pantry, found what I wanted, and was in the act of returning, when the door of the cabin immediately opposite was opened, and there stood Helen Williams.

I stared at her, doubting my senses; my heart seemed to stop beating; I turned pale and stood as one thunderstruck; I clutched hold of the cuddy table, for the sudden great surprise made me feel sick; my head swam; I stood transfixed; I could not believe, I say, that what I saw was real. Only a moment before I had been thinking of her and our farewell to each other that day, a week gone; and now there she stood, she whom but a moment before I believed was still at Burmarsh, and from whom only that morning I had received a letter, posted at Burmarsh, and written by her.

"My God, Nelly!" I cried: "is it you? How came you here? Great God, what a surprise!"

She ran round the table and threw her arms about me, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Will!" she cried, "I could not bear to be separated from you! A whole long year was too much to bear. Do not be angry with me, Will. Oh, Will, kiss me, dear, and tell me you are glad that I am with you."

"Glad!—angry!—why, this is a dream, surely!" I cried. "Did Mr. Johnson know of this? and Phoebe? And why did not you tell me? What has your love made you do, dear? Why, we shall be a whole year away, and how can you stand so long a voyage? Why, this is enough to drive me mad! You—alone—daring all this for me! Why have you done it, Nelly?"

Scarcely knowing what I said, and still doubting that it was all real, I drew away and grasped her hands and looked at her, until the sight of her face, and the thought of the love that had made her do this thing, overmastered me, and for some moments I durst not venture to speak.

Meanwhile she stood watching every change in my face, not daring to address me, and growing red and then white, and her hands trembled in mine. I have often thought since that my great surprise was cruel, as serving as a kind of rebuke to her for this unparalleled action; and yet when I consider that, when she broke upon me thus, I really and truly believed her to be some hundreds of miles distant, and imagined her at Burmarsh in the old house in which I had left her, and that I had then a letter in my pocket written by her but the day before, in which, it is true, she said that she trusted God would permit us to meet sooner than I had any hope of, though it would have been impossible for me to discover the least hint of her intention to follow me in that letter—I say, when I reflect upon all this, I am not surprised that her sudden apparition should have terrified me and drawn me away for a while from all sense of her courage and love which had impelled her to act in this manner.

Presently, hardly knowing what I did, I folded her to my heart, though immediately after a fright seized me, to think of her as being alone with only me as her protector, and a terrible long sea-voyage, with all its perils, before her.

“Nelly,” I exclaimed, “I must not let you take this journey. The captain can put you ashore at Deal. It is not too late, though it will be soon. It is better that

you should forfeit any money you have paid than go this long voyage. I will tell the captain the truth, and ask him to land you at Deal. Why, how came you to do this, Nelly?"

"Now that I am with you I shall stop with you, Will. If you set me ashore you will break my heart," she answered, in a firm voice, though her eyes swam with tears. "I do not fear the voyage; it will be a great change. And could I be more comfortable in Mr. Johnson's house than I am here?" says she, looking around her; "and oh, Will! could you bear to part with me now?"

And saying this, she laid my hand against her cheek—an old sweet caress of hers—and kissed my hand. At this moment the cuddy grew dark, by which I knew we had overtaken the fog, and were in it; at the same time I heard the pilot's hoarse voice hailing the tug from the forecastle.

"I shall have to leave you," said I, "to go on deck, for it would not do to be missed and found here with you," I exclaimed, the perception of a new embarrassment flashing upon me. And, indeed, already suspecting that we might have been observed through the skylight, under which we were almost directly standing, I led her to her cabin and quitted her with a kiss, but without another word.

So many different feelings distracted me, that it was fortunate there was no work for me to do when I gained the deck, or certainly it must have been thought I had taken leave of my senses. The fog had closed densely around us; there was still a little wind, but it only blew the fog athwart us, which was so thick that the tug ahead was barely visible, a mere looming

shadow. She had slackened her speed, and we were now moving slowly through the water.

I found Mr. Thomas at the break of the poop, and asked if he knew whether we were going to bring up?

"Not yet," he answered. "The pilot doesn't want that trouble, and who does? He has just sent aft to say that he believes this fog will lift presently, and that if we tow slowly there'll be no risk."

I crossed over to the starboard side of the poop, where, with one hand on a backstay, I stood buried in thought, my eyes fixed on the water, which went by quietly, and was as white as bright steel in the fog that had brought the horizon to within a biscuit's throw. I ought not to weary you with my reflections here; but I should say that my sweetheart's being in the ship made clear everything that had puzzled me, especially her seeming want of sorrow when we parted, and her tears when we spoke, that last evening when we were on the river, of Mr. Johnson and Phoebe.

I looked about me to judge whether, if I should go below again for a few minutes to talk to her, I should be missed. There was nothing to do; the captain, with the Spaniard and his wife, was walking up and down the poop, and Mr. Black had joined the chief mate. I was bound to hear the first call, and so I went below and made my way into the cuddy, taking first a squint at the pantry to make sure the steward was not about.

The cuddy was now as dark as if the evening had closed around. I tapped on Nelly's door, and she asked who that was? On my replying, she instantly came out.

"I cannot rest until I have heard more of your

story," said I; "although I ought to remain on deck. Even now your being here seems a dream, and were you to vanish as I stand talking to you I should not be half so surprised as I am at holding your dear hand and looking into your eyes."

The blood rose to her face as she answered: "I did not intend that you should know I was on board until we were out of sight of land. Phoebe told me you would be more angry than glad to see me, and so you were, dear; but I don't think you are angry now," says she, smiling. "You will not tell the captain to land me at Deal?"

"Have you really the courage to face this long voyage—and alone?"

"Not alone, Will; and whilst you are with me I shall have plenty of courage."

I could have taken her in my arms, for my very heart was fired by the look that accompanied her words.

"Will," says she, smoothing the back of my hand and keeping her face down, "as I told you, a whole year seemed such a terrible long while to be separated, that as the weeks rolled on with us at Burmarsh I felt my heart would break when the time arrived to say good-bye, and one day I made up my mind that I would go out in your ship as a passenger, so that we might be together. I told Phoebe, but she would not hear of it for some time, and threatened to tell you and her father; but at last she thought it was very natural I should wish to be with you, and she owned a year was a long time to wait, and that a sea-voyage might do me good. Besides, she felt I should be as safe with you as with her at Burmarsh. Indeed, she owned to me that if she had been alone in the world

she would have joined me, for she thought a sea-voyage a delightful thing. So, Will, I wrote in the name of Helen Maitland to the owners of the *Waldershare* in Leadenhall Street, and represented myself as an invalid, and that I had been ordered to take a sea-voyage, and asked their charge for the journey to Callao and back in the same ship, the *Waldershare*. They replied that the charge would be one hundred and fifty pounds for the double journey. I had a hundred pounds by me, and asked Mr. Johnson to advance me a hundred, which he did without any questions—I believe he thought it was for you, and I did not mind that he did, dear,” says she, interrupting herself, but without a smile. “I sent the money to the ship-owners, and they wrote back to tell me that a cabin was secured for me, and that I might join the ship either in London or Gravesend. I chose Gravesend, and I dare say you can guess why.”

“Then the captain knows you by the name of Miss Maitland?”

“Yes.”

“And does Mr. Johnson know where you are?”

“By this time he does,” she answered; “for Phœbe was to tell him when he asked for me.”

“He will be very much frightened and pained, I fear.”

She made no answer.

“And all this for me!” I cried, realizing the greatness of her love as I thought of her resolution, her courageous deception, her lonely journey from Burmarsh, her lonely arrival at Gravesend.

“You are no longer angry, Will?”

“No, darling; but I am deeply moved. It is an incredible act. No one would believe such a story.”

"No girl would doubt it who loves her sweetheart truly," she answered in a low voice.

"Do you remember the song you sung under my window about the merry sailor's life?"

She blushed and smiled. "It was bad judgment, Will, and I am a bad actress. There was no reason why I should have tried to make you think I was light-hearted on the day before we were supposed to part."

My astonishment was past now, and other emotions had taken its place. The sense that she was with me filled me with gladness, and I was wondering now that ever I could have spoken of her landing at Deal. Besides, when I considered how many girls had undertaken sea-voyages alone, coming or going to join their parents or friends or lovers in India or Australia and other distant places, in charge only of the captains of the ships in which they sailed, I found that, outside the real reason of Nelly's voyage, there was nothing very strange in her being alone in the vessel; and so far as I knew myself, I was at least assured that she could have no better protector in this world than the man who loved her and waited only to marry her. I was now as light-hearted as I had before been perplexed and worried, and she was very quick to notice the change in me.

"And now as to our behaviour to each other," said I. "We had best keep our secret for the present, though I think I shall make a confidant of the chief mate later on, who is a good-hearted little fellow, as I believe, and will take a particular interest in you when he hears that you are to be my wife; though I shall tell him that your joining as a passenger was planned

between us, as that will give the whole thing a ship-shape look. As to the captain, I shall require to see more of his character before I open my mouth; and therefore, for the present, it will be safest to keep apart as much as possible." And I went on to explain to her that my position was a subordinate one, and that the skipper might take it into his head to resent any intimacy on my part with her on board his ship, and make my berth a hot one. She grasped my whole meaning with the quickness of a woman's wit, and promised to do exactly as I bid her. I advised her for the present to play the part of an invalid, and was going on, when a footstep on the companion ladder warned me to break off, and she had just time to enter her cabin, and I to fetch the foremost end of the cuddy, when the captain made his appearance.

"Is that you, Mr. Lee?" he sung out.

"Yes, sir."

"Where's the steward? Send him aft, will you, and tell him to light the cuddy lamps."

He then stepped up to Nelly's cabin, as she afterwards told me, and asked her if she would join Madam Espinosa on deck; and was extremely polite, waiting until she had put on her hat, and then giving her his arm, though there was little enough for her to see when she got upon deck.

I passed the word forward for the steward, and waited till he came out of the cook's galley, and then I went on to the poop again just as Nelly came through the companion with Captain Flanders. It did appear to me extraordinary that she and I should be together in the same ship, and it seemed a mere fancy to think that we should not be separated, but that the whole

voyage, which I had looked forward to with so much dread because it was going to keep me away from my sweetheart for more than a year, was to be taken with her, and that I should see more of her and be more with her than if I had stayed in Burmarsh for the year. She immediately engaged Madam Espinosa in conversation, whilst the gentlemen stood round. I, of course, held to the foremost end of the poop.

The fog had somewhat thinned, to the extent that the tug, and perhaps a quarter of a mile of water beyond her, were visible. It was evident it hung low, for it was white and luminous with the sunshine that was pouring in the blue sky over it. There was not a breath of air now. The pilot had sung out to the tug to fire away again, and we were running swiftly over the water, as I might judge by the lines of green weed and the great yellow blobs of jelly-fish that went past. It was now a little before six, and we were somewhere abreast of Herne Bay, heading sharp for the Foreland, which ought to be well on the starboard quarter by eight.

At six o'clock the first dinner bell rang, and Captain Flanders and the passengers went below, Mr. Black handing Nelly to the companion with a fine elaborate flourish. Mr. Thomas likewise vanished to adorn himself, and the pilot forward and I aft kept the deck, an arrangement that answered my purpose, as for the present the less I was thrown with Nelly in the society of the captain the better. I took a furtive squint through the skylight at the dinner-table when they were seated at it, and saw that Nelly was placed between Mr. Black and Madam Espinosa. The lamplight filled her hair with spangles, and her eyes, when she threw a glance

up, though she could not have seen me, flashed like the jewels on the Spaniard's fingers. The skipper sat, with his egg-shaped head, at the head of the table as grave as a ghost, the eyes in his gaunt cheeks looking like smouldering cinders; and little beau Thomas was at the other end, though all that I could see of him was his hair, that shone as though he had been dipped into an oil-cask. Madam Espinosa's laugh sounded gay, and Mr. Black's guffaw was brave; but I believed we should hear different sounds when we began to feel the swell.

The only vessel we sighted hereabouts was a smack at anchor, into which the tug was heading as neatly as you aim the end of a thread into the eye of a needle. She oozed out of the fog, her red mainsail set, and her foresail hanging in a bight over her bows, and they raised a yell on board of her when they saw us which the tug answered by a prolonged whistle. There was, however, plenty of time and plenty of room, and we gave her as wide a berth as she could want. She made a pretty picture, with her shadow full of colour hanging in the burnished water, and her men, in boots up to their thighs and cased in blue jerseys, staring at us; she was a west-country smack, with her decks full of nets, and she faded astern of us just as the reflection of your face fades on a looking-glass on which you breathe.

The pilot's dinner was sent forward to him, and he ate it on the forecastle, making the capstan a table, and coming up to his plate and taking a mouthful, and then leaning over the rail and staring ahead, and so on. I went below at half-past seven, when the cuddy table was deserted, and got something to eat.

Nelly had gone into Madam Espinosa's cabin, and so I saw nothing of her. As I came on deck I heard the pilot roar out to the tug, "Keep a sharp look-out for the Elbow buoy," which was answered by a faint, "Ay, ay."

"I shall bring up to the east'ards of the Gull buoy, abreast of the Nor' Sands Head Lightship!" he shouted.

"Right you are!" came back from the tug, and so all hands had their cue.

The tug was now towing at half-speed, for the fog had settled down very thick. A hand was in the starboard main chains with the lead which he hove at intervals, his wild cry sounding strangely as it followed the splash of the lead. Fore and aft the decks were wet with the fog, that had now taken the character of a very fine rain, and rolled among the yards in volumes, like clouds of steam. The outline of the tug was just visible ahead, and the flapping of her paddles resembled the run of heavy naked feet upon a deck.

Scarcely any experience that a sailor can pass through is more irritating and bewildering than a fog in the English Channel. Every faculty in him, sight, smell, hearing, all his instincts, his memory, his judgment, are taxed to the utmost, and all together. We knew we should have to bring up, and could not tell but that the fog would lift the moment we had our anchor down, and then we should have to get under way again. All hands were as surly as scalded monkeys, and forwards the air rumbled with sea-blessings. The pilot had held on, hoping the fog would clear; and now that it had come down as thick as an Antarctic snowfall, he had still to hold on to fetch the anchorage

he wanted, that would put us somewhat out of the road of passing steamers.

However, a few minutes after eight bells there came a hail from the tug. The pilot sung back an answer; the tow-rope was let go; a shout was raised, "Stand clear of the chain-cable!" the ring of the carpenter's hammer rose clear and shrill, and souse! down dropped the anchor with a vast splash, and in a few moments the ship was riding placidly, with the tug at anchor about two cables' lengths away.

The evening had gathered now, and this, with the fog, made it desperately black all round. We slung a powerful lamp on the forestay, and a couple of hands were stationed forward, with orders to keep their ears straining and report any sound they heard; for, as it turned out, we had brought up slap in the fairway of vessels requiring to head an easterly course: a little to the eastward of the Gull buoy, with the lightship stationed at the north end of the Goodwin Sands, bearing east by south; and this was the devil's own weather for a running-down job.

The tide had swung the ship with her head pointing down Channel. How near we were to the Sands I could not imagine, as the fog had settled down so thick now that the tug had vanished, although she was near enough for us to hear the voices of the men aboard of her, and, beheld from the poop, our riding-light merely glimmered like a glow-worm, with threads of lustre sticking into the fog like spikes of gold: but the moment the ship was silent, the creaming and seething of the tide on the Sands was as distinct as the gurgle of the water alongside.

It was to be watch and watch with me and Mr.

Thomas, and I stood the first watch, while he went below to lay down in his clothes ready for the cry of "All hands!" which would certainly come the instant the weather cleared.

In the cuddy, as I might see by casting my eyes on the skylight, the captain was talking with Mr. Black, and the Spaniard and his wife were playing at backgammon or draughts, whilst Nelly watched them with her elbows on the table and her cheeks in her hands. I stood looking at her for a long while, my heart very full, and then joined the pilot and took a few turns up and down the deck with him. The fog was choking work, and he sputtered and swore over it with the true salt's trick of grumbling, from time to time thrusting his nose into the binnacle, where his mahogany face sparkled in the lamplight like a wet tarpaulin. He went below when the grog was on the table, and I watched him raise a screecher of rum to his lips, nodding politely around before he drank, and drying his mouth on the sleeve of his coat.

So I was now alone on deck. There was a deep stillness on the water; the only sound that penetrated the fog was the continuous delicate hissing of the tide running by the Sands; but this, as I say, being continuous, seemed to form a part of the silence—at all events, it appeared to heighten it. The men were below, glad to get out of the damp air, which was not rendered more tolerable by its tepid temperature. The two hands on the look-out paced the forecastle noiselessly.

Presently I sung out: "Forward there! Can you see anything of the tug?"

"No, sir."

"Keep your ears wide open, my lads."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Four bells were struck,—ten o'clock. The captain came on deck, followed by the pilot, and they walked down to the break of the poop and had a few words together.

"It's thick enough to hang your hat on," said the pilot. "I reckon a southerly wind 'll follow this, and I wish it 'ud come."

"We have not the ordering of the winds, sir, and we must be patient," returned Captain Flanders in a deep voice. His hollow tone sounded odd, and the pilot gave a grunt. Perhaps he was as puzzled as I by the philosophy of a sea captain under circumstances which might set an angel grumbling.

On a sudden one of the men forward sung out—

"Is that a ship on the starboard beam there, sir? I thought I see a lumping big shadow out there just now, but it's gone."

I ran to the rail and strained my eyes, but it was like looking into smoke. At this moment I heard a sound remarkably like the creak of a block-sheaf on a rusty pin, followed by a dull thud, as though a coil of rope had been flung down on a deck.

"Did you hear that, sir?" hailed one of the look-out men.

"Ay, ay! There is evidently a vessel somewhere near us, sir," said I, addressing the captain.

The pilot hollowed his claws and roared out, "Ship ahoy!"

We listened, and in a few moments a sound came back to us out of the fog which sounded uncommonly like "Well, well!"

"Have you got your anchor down?" bawled the pilot.

To this there was no reply.

"Ship ahoy!" he shouted again.

The same dull-toned answer, resembling "Well, well!" came back, this time a little fainter.

"If you haven't brought up, let go your anchor!" roared the pilot, in a voice that should have been audible at Margate, "or you'll be ashore!"

"There she is, sir!" was shouted from our fore-castle; and for an instant only, as the folds of the fog opened like the mouth of a purse, I caught a glimpse of a large vessel under top-gallant sails, and away beyond her twinkled the triangular lanterns of the lightship.* The fog closed, and she and the further lights disappeared.

"Why, that fellow's a madman!" exclaimed the pilot, spitting on the deck with great excitement. "Some blasted furriner, I expects, who's too mean to ship a pilot; and there he is bound for the Nor' Sands Head as cleverly as if he was booked for half the insurance money!"

The captain turned suddenly and walked away, as if offended by the pilot's language; indeed, his movement was too suggestive for the meaning of it to be missed. The pilot looked round after him, laughed in his throat with a gargling sound, and then, asking me to "obleege" him with a pipe of tobacco, filled a black bowl from my pouch and went down on the quarter-deck, where he stood blowing large clouds under the break of the poop.

"Mr. Leel" hailed the skipper.

* This vessel burns only one light now.

I immediately went aft.

"The habit of swearing is very offensive to me," said he, in his sepulchral voice. "I hope, sir, you are never guilty of it?"

"Why, sir, I don't think I am."

"A man who has a soul to be saved," he continued, in a voice that seemed to tremble, "should talk as if he believed that the words he is speaking are the last God will permit him to pronounce in this life."

I had nothing to say.

"I may as well tell you, Mr. Lee, while I am on the subject," he continued, "that I intend that this ship shall be a pious ship—after the primitive fashion, sir; the fashion of the first Christians. To you, as one of my officers, I shall look for all the assistance you can render me; and my order to you is, that you will report every man to me whom you may hear using an oath."

I touched my cap, and he walked away, going to a part of the rail that stood in the light of the cuddy lamps shining through the skylight, where he remained for some moments, with his face upturned as though he were praying.

I thought his manner extraordinary, though I own it impressed me. I mean to say that, whilst I heartily concurred in his views of profane swearing, of which I always had as great a horror as any man, and the religious discipline of the ship (though here a limit would be wanted, for too much religion repels sailors as it does shore-folks—as the south pole of a magnet repels the needle), the tone of voice in which he addressed me, and his talk of the first Christians, and

then his going away and fixing his eyes on the sky, struck me as very singular, and something to bear thinking over and watching. He came away from the rail, and taking a look at the binnacle, walked up and down the poop with his arms folded.

Meanwhile, the pilot sucked his pipe on the quarter-deck, and the tobacco smoke came up through the fog in straight lines out of his mouth, so great was the calm.

The silence all around remained unbroken, and nothing more was to be seen of the ship that had drifted past us.

It was now five bells. We carried our bell on the fore-castle, and whilst one of the men was striking it, the fog thinned overhead and astern, and glistened with the radiance of the moon. Just at that moment I fancied I beheld a flash of lightning down in the south-east, a little abaft the port beam; but immediately afterwards came the report of a gun, and, just as a hand might divide a pair of curtains, the fog in that direction parted and rolled away on either side, leaving a broad space of clear water with the moon-light lying bright upon it, beyond the frosty line of which was a big ship with her sails hanging in pale spaces.

"She's got what she wants!" shouted the pilot, springing on to the poop. "She's ashore, as sure as my head's on my neck!"

A spout of flame whizzed from her side, and down came the thunder of another gun.

"See! the lightship is taking up the chorus!" I cried, as a broad glare of light streamed in the fog to the eastwards of the ship, and was immediately followed by a loud concussion.

The fog was now rapidly thinning all down in the south, but wreaths of it had floated in over the space that had opened, though in the watery moonshine—for her disc was now visible, hanging wan and sickly over the vapour that was drifting landwards and thinning as it went—the ship could just be made out.

They now sent up a rocket and burned a blue light, and another gun flashed on board the lightship. The haze all around the vessel was illuminated by the blue fire in a semi-circle, the outer edge of which was as defined as the blue in a rainbow; and the water, catching the ghastly lustre, doubled it and filled the eye with a complete circle of phosphorescent radiance, in the midst of which was the ship, with her sails looking as *green* as leaves, whilst her spars and rigging, and the slender, withe-like shoot of her bowsprit, and her tall black hull, and the white quarter-boats at her davits, twinkled as if gemmed with emeralds, until the light suddenly went out, amid the slinging crash of another gun, and left the ship a pale phantom in the moonlight, that was now fast mastering the remains of the fog.

"Mr. Lee!" sung out Captain Flanders in his deep voice from the after end of the poop. "Call some of the hands aft; man one of the boats and row over to that ship, and tell them to keep up their courage, and that the life-boat and hovellers will be alongside them before long."

To hear was to obey.

"Forward there! tell the boatswain to send some hands along to man the starboard quarter-boat."

"I say, captain!" shouted the pilot. "The fog's cleared, and we ought to get under way. Mr. Lee can

do no good, sir. They've got a tug at Ramsgate Harbour, and she'll have the life-boat alongside in three-quarters of an hour!"

"Let Mr. Lee execute *my* orders!" roared the captain, the thunder of his voice—it was like a neigh; I never heard the like of it—mingling with the boom of another gun from the lightship. "The windlass shall not be touched aboard this ship until our fellow-creatures yonder have been reassured!"

I was quite disposed to agree with the pilot that the errand was an idle one, as all the help the ship required would speedily reach her from the shore; but the captain's excitement had already set him handling the falls of the quarter-boat, and the boatswain's pipe having sounded, a dozen men came tumbling aft. Four men jumped into the boat. I tumbled into the stern-sheets and we were lowered into the water. The boat-falls were unhooked. I shouted, "Give way, my lads!" and we headed for the ship, that was now evidently in a terrible fright, for she was firing her guns as fast as she could load them, and sending up rockets as though she wanted to give us an exhibition of fireworks. The fog still hung in low, long white lines here and there upon the water, but the body of it had fetched away to the northwards, and the moon-light sparkled brightly on the sea. The men squared their arms and their oars cheeped furiously: they were under the impression that life was to be saved, and as they were fresh from their bunks, they had only got a smattering into their skulls of the real state of things.

As we approached the ship, I noticed that she had all her boats fast; but from the confusion that evidently reigned on board, her yards boxed about any way, her

sails hanging loose, her running gear all slack, I easily guessed that she was a foreigner. They let drive another gun when we were about a couple of hundred yards distant, and fired another blue light, the glare of which, helping the moonlight, enabled me to see that her high poop was crowded with human beings, many of them women. She had gone ashore bow on, and hung firmly: all to starboard of her and ahead were the dry sands glistening like silver in the moonlight, stretching away into the gloom with a thin edging of froth. Whether she had seen us before I could not say: but they raised a wild screech when we were within hail, and in the blue light the gesticulating mob looked like the inhabitants of an infernal world.

"'Vast rowing!" I sung out; and then standing up, I bawled, "Can any one speak English aboard of you?"

My question fell unheeded, as it was reasonable it should, seeing that all hands were jabbering and yelling to me; the women tossing their hands and pointing to the sands, and the men dancing upon the poop railing and capering at the backstays like daft folks. What their lingo was I could not then tell, and I don't think one of their own countrymen would have understood them.

I hailed them again in English, and the hubbub ceasing, I repeated my question.

"Me speakee leedel Anglish!" skreeked a wavering voice.

"What are you?" I shouted. "French?"

"Yash, yash, Franch."

Unhappily, my knowledge of French was very small; however, I thought I would talk to them after the

fashion of most Britons, who, when they find a foreigner ignorant of the English language, shout to him at the top of their voices in a dialect which is neither English nor anything else.

"Me English!" I roared. "You ashore—but no danger—you savey that!—no danger—you wait—by-and-by boatee come—you all right, ah? You makee plenty of flare! plenty boatee come quick and takee ashore!"

"Confound it!" I exclaimed, sinking back, for the only good I had done was to set them all roaring at me again; and there they were, asking questions with one voice, in the midst of which they fired another gun.

"I don't think you can do anything more, sir," said the fellow who pulled stroke in my boat, grinning in the moonlight. "They'll screech themselves quiet presently, and then maybe they'll hear the Ramsgate tug coming to 'em."

"Ay," said a second man, "and there'll be a whole fleet of hovellers around 'em before another hour's gone. I've been hovelling myself off this coast, and if I was on board that ere ship I lay I'd see the lights of a shoal of luggers under way now."

I was very sorry not to be able to explain this to them, though I question if a knowledge of their language would have been of much use to me, for nothing short of a voice as loud as one of their guns could have made itself heard above the hullabaloo aboard. It was a painful sight to see the women in the moonlight tossing their hands, falling down upon their knees, crossing themselves and dragging at their hair, for all the world as though the ship was about to founder; whilst the men, instead of keeping silence and ex-

plaining to the women that, so far as their lives were concerned, they were as safe as if they had been in harbour, went dancing about the deck, pointing here and there, shouting to one another, yelling questions to me, toppling down upon their noses, and executing a mass of absurd antics. I took her to be an emigrant ship, but could not find any name upon her stern, nor could I imagine where she was bound to, to be humbugging about these sands. Nobody at all who looked like a captain or a mate was distinguishable among the crowd. The wonder to me was that, their fright being so great, they had not lowered their boats; but there they all hung secure at the davits, very good, white, handsome boats, too, and plenty of them.

My attention was now directed by one of the men to the *Waldershare*, who was trying to signal us by means of a lantern made fast to the peak signal haliards and run up and down. Having not the least doubt that help was fast coming to the distracted Frenchmen, from some of the places abreast of us, I gave the order to the men to out oars, and we headed for our own ship. I expected that our departure would be followed by a broadside of yells and screams; instead of which, and almost before we had got way upon the boat, the hubbub dropped into a sort of hum, the character of which is indescribable, though the effect it produced upon the ear was startling; and then, while a hundred throats split the night with cheers, up went a couple of rockets, and once more a blue light shed its ghastly radiance upon the water.

"They have caught sight of the tug, sir," said one of the men, quietly; and this was undoubtedly the case, for by the time we had got aboard of the *Waldershare*

and hoisted the boat, the steamer's lights were visible, with the sparks flying along the smoke she left behind her, and she passed close astern of us with a big white life-boat in tow, whilst our windlass was clanking and our own tug was backing up to us to get hold of our tow-rope.

CHAPTER IV.

TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

It was now a bright moonlight night, with a light wind from the southward, not a vestige of the fog visible, the North Foreland light burning like a yellow star upon a sky full of white stars, and the coast sloping pale and distant down into the west. By three bells—half-past one—our tow-rope was singing under the pull of the tug, and the big French ship, with the steamer lying near her, and two or three luggers hovering around, was dropping rapidly astern.

I had found Mr. Thomas on deck when I came aboard, and he expressed his amazement that the captain should have thought fit to send me on such a fool's errand. However, we had had no time for talk, and now that we were under way again, he, having had three hours' rest, advised me to go and lie down, as the tug would leave us after we were clear of the Downs, and all hands would be called to make sail.

I scrambled into my bunk without even pulling off my boots, and scarcely was my head down when I was fast asleep.

I was called by Mr. Thomas, and instantly hopped out and went on deck. The breeze had freshened, the tug had left us, and the hands were busy making

sail. Down in the east the dawn was faintly streaking the sky, but the moon was still bright in the west, and over the dark line of land the stars were shining clearly. We were now to shift for ourselves, and our voyage had at last fairly begun. Already the fore and main topsails were sheeted home, and the yards mast-headed with a chorus that went echoing far into the darkness. Making sail is a noisy business on board a merchant-man. The hands stamped along freely with sheets and halliards in their hands, every gang of workers had their own song and chorus, and every one on deck and, for the matter of that, every one aloft too, seemed bent on rivalling by his own hoarse shouts the shouts of every other man.

"Now then, my lads, aft here and sheet home this mizzen-torpsail!"

"Get that foretack down smartly!"

"Are you all ready there with that inner jib?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Then hoist away!"

"Main-top there! jump aloft and loose the top-gallants'!"

"Hoist away the main topmast stay-sail!"

"A hand aloft and loose the fore top-gallants'!"

"Sheet home, my lads, sheet home! overhaul your clewlines there! well the lee sheet! another pull to wind'ard! belay! tally on to the halliards—up with her smartly! Hurrah!"

And not by degrees only, but with smartness that would not have discredited a man-of-war, sail was piled upon the *Waldershare*; and whilst the dawn was slowly changing into ash-colour the surface of the eastern sky, against which the rim of the sea stood

black as ink, and whilst the moon was sailing down the western heaven, whose bright stars gemmed the brows of the tall English cliffs, and the riding-lights of the wind-bound ships in the Downs were twinkling like fire-flies upon the bosom of the dark waters, the *Waldershare*, leaning under her pale spaces of canvas which the wind had moulded into shapes of beauty, with every sail set that would draw, shredded the water with her keen lip and glided like a cloud down the calm English Channel.

There were many little jobs to be done before the men were divided into watches, and before I went below the sun had risen. I stayed a moment or two to watch that sight, and take my first glance at the noble ship under canvas by daylight. First the sky was like frosted silver, but then it grew rosy, and whilst the sea lay blushing, a brilliant fragment of silver stood upon the horizon for an instant; it grew quickly, turning golden as it enlarged, until with a bound the glorious orb soared into a sky of pearl and rose; the giant white cliffs of Dover, with the sullen and beetling South Foreland, flashed back the light quickly, and the sea became a luminous green; the town of Deal lay in a glare of sunshine, the windows of the houses sparkling among the haze that overhung the place, beyond which the country extended as pink as a morning cloud, while close under the land a dozen smacks were creeping with their sails as red as blood, and all ahead the green sea ran in sparkles, dashed here and there with foam, and the coast of France hung like a shadow upon the horizon.

But my eyes were heavy; the chief mate was won-

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dering to see me linger when I was at liberty to go below; so down I went, and down I lay, and I never stirred until I was called to go on deck at eight o'clock.

The breeze freshened as the sun mounted the sky, and it was now blowing fresh and steady from the south and west, forward enough to put us on a bow-line, and the *Waldershare* was smoking through the water like a steamer. However, as I had suspected, the ship was too deep, and consequently too stiff. With her heavy spars and vast spread of canvas, she should have buried her lee chain plates under such a breeze; as it was, the slope of her deck was scarcely worth speaking of, and but very little of her copper was exposed to windward, though what could be seen of it flashed brightly along the tumbling green waters and shone like a new brass kettle. Still, her trim did not fret the glorious old hooker. She was stretching a wake astern that ran away into the horizon, and all to leeward the water under the foot of the mainsail, the sheet of which was well aft, swept past in a hum and dazzle of froth, and we could guess our speed by watching the nearer shore slipping by the land beyond it, and the number of vessels we took up and quietly set astern of us.

Nelly came on deck soon after I had relieved Mr. Thomas, and seeing her head at the companion, I had a good excuse to join her, under the pretence of finding her a chair or leading her to a sheltered part of the poop. There was a hand at the wheel, and nobody else aft, but the captain had only just gone below, and might be up again in a minute.

"I was hoping that you would be on deck," she

whispered eagerly, as she gave me her hand. "What a glorious morning! How lovely the land looks! How Phoebe would enjoy this!"

She looked up at the towering canvas with flashing eyes, and at the water seething past, and her breath came and went quickly, for the whole spirit of the windy, green, and foamy scene, with the steady blue sky overhead, and the leaning tower of canvas, and the sparkling shore, came upon her full and strong in an instant.

"You were born to be a sailor's wife," said I, delighted by the kindling happiness in her face; "but this is a noble ship, and just such a home on the rolling deep as I could wish for you."

"How could you have been angry with me, Will, for joining you?" she exclaimed.

"Never reproach me with that again, Nelly. I was too surprised to understand my own mind; and besides, you are so precious to me that I was frightened to think of your being exposed to the risks of a sea-voyage."

"What is good for you is good for me. I am quite happy. I would not change places with the queen. What have I left? Two kind friends, indeed: but, then, I have left them that I may be with *you*, Will; and you cannot tell me, although I am not yet your wife, that where you are I should not be."

Her dear face glowed as she spoke thus, but she kept her eyes fixed on me bravely and trustfully; indeed, we knew each other's hearts, and thoughts were in us which we could tell each other without the help of words.

She asked me the cause of the guns being fired

last night; and whilst I was giving her the story of the French ship, and the part I played in the little drama, the captain's long head emerged through the companion.

"I have been thinking," I whispered to her, "you had better tell him I am an old friend of your guardian. That will save us all bother for the future when he sees us talking together, which will be pretty often."

Saying which, I placed a chair for her, raised my hat, and left her as Captain Flanders came to her side. Some excuse was wanted to account for my conversing with her, who was simply a young lady passenger in the captain's eyes, whilst I was officer of the watch, and had no business to open my lips except in the way of my duty. Indeed, I have sailed with captains who have strongly objected to their officers holding any sort of converse with passengers. What Captain Flanders' views were on this subject I had not yet had any chance of finding out, but as it was not to be supposed that I could be thrown with Nelly day after day and not speak to her, I imagined, if she told the captain I was a friend, he might relax any discipline he might have in this matter, merely to please her.

I may as well say here that her explanation had the effect I desired, and that Captain Flanders never took any notice of my talking to her; though I was careful never to engage her in his presence during my watch on deck, or, at any rate, to prolong my conversation for any such length of time as would give him an excuse to order me away to my duty.

I was a little surprised to find that, although in a

sense we might fairly consider ourselves at sea, he still stuck to his quaint land-togs. In his high hat, big satin stock, and tall collars which shored up his long, cadaverous, hollow face, he carried a most scriptural air, and was certainly the very last man aboard that would have been taken for captain.

Soon after he had joined Nelly, I discovered that we had one more hand aboard than was included in the muster-roll; for a fat spaniel dog came floundering on to the poop, and walloped along the deck, making as he went mischievous snaps at the heads of the poultry in the hencoops, and setting them all cackling. He belonged to the skipper, who called to him in his deep, tragic voice to come and "lie down, sir!" which the brute declined to do before he had made various ineffectual efforts to climb into Nelly's lap. The dear girl endured these onslaughts with a sweet smile, patting the dog after every wobbling jump, and glancing at me as much as to say, "I mean to make friends with Captain Flanders for your sake, Will."

The pilot, who was known by the name of Mr. Bolt, now came on to the poop off the quarter-deck, and after taking a long squint at the skipper and casting a glance aloft and to windward with a very sour face, complained in a husky voice that the captain had forced "a track" against swearing upon him.

"A what?" I shouted.

"Why, a track—a book—a little printed book," he growled, with his face glowing like copper. "I've been to sea, man and boy, eight an' forty year," he continued, "and in all my life I've never been insulted like this before."

I said I did not think the captain meant to insult him; but nothing that I could say would do. He had his own opinion of the matter, and declared that no sea-captain had a right to sarmonize him either by books or anything else. "When I've cast his ship away it'll be time enough for him to begin to sarmonize." He considered the tract an insult, and gave me to know that he felt it deeply, and never could have believed that any man calling himself a sailor would have dared to put such an affront upon him. He afterwards eased his mind by jamming himself against the weather backstays, and scowling at the skipper, who, however, took no notice of him.

I thought this action very odd on the part of the captain, however well-intentioned. The result proved it wanting in tact, and a few errors in judgment of this description might soon lead to a strong prejudice against him fore and aft. Ashore the giving of tracts would not challenge a thought: for my part I always take them, and read them too, and have got ideas from them which I am none the worse for having; but aboard of a ship a tract-giving skipper would be thought, in Jack's lingo, "a rum shake;" and it is natural that the very monotony of the sea-life, coupled with the sort of passive antagonism that grows up among people who are thrown constantly together, and that makes every one a keen critic of his fellow, should furnish particular weight to any incident in the least degree unusual or uncommon.

The captain addressed himself with great earnestness to Nelly, and she listened to him with her eyes fixed on the deck. They were presently joined by Madam Espinosa, and shortly afterwards her husband

emerged, followed by Mr. Black. I was a good deal amused by the rapt postures into which the Spaniard flung himself as he looked around him, starting tragically as he ran his eyes aloft, then squeezing his hands together at his knees as he cocked his nose at the shore, and waving his flashing hands around him, as he talked to his wife with wonderful volubility in his native tongue. His wife's yellow hair lay all down her back, and her figure seemed bursting out of her tight clothes. Mr. Black looked gravely about him, clearly resolved not to be cheated into any appreciation of the bright and windy scene until he was sure it was worth admiring.

There was just the touch of a light swell on here, but right abeam, and scarcely noticeable; but I reckoned, if this breeze lasted, the Spanish merchant, if I might judge by the colour of his face, would be on his back before we had made the Isle of Wight, for as the Channel broadened we should be finding more sea.

He came capering over to where I stood presently, first looking at the pilot, then at me, as meditating whom he should address, and no doubt finding the expression on my face the pleasanter one; for old Bolt stood up against the main backstays as ugly and sour as a defaced figure-head.

"Are you officer?" says he, nodding quickly, and grinning behind his great nose with every desire to be polite.

"Yes, I am, sir," I answered.

"Lieutenant, eh?"

"Why, a kind of lieutenant," said I, holding there was no use in calling myself mate, as he wouldn't understand what I meant.

"You speak Spanish?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Why not you learn? it is reech language—beautifuller more san English. Why not you learn?"

"I'll try and get at it some of these days," I replied.

"What you tink of dis ship, eh? Is she fine ship?"

"Why, yes, a very fine ship."

"No danger, eh, you tink? Quite safe ship, eh? and fast? De wataire beautiful to look at, but, rabo de lechon de San Antonio! oogley to feel here!" says he, taking his throat in his jewelled hands.

I thought that the most sensible thing he had said yet.

"What zail you call dat?" he asked, pointing to the main-royal.

I told him.

"And dat?"

I gave him the name of that too.

"Marie!" he shouted, "comb here."

His wife waddled over to us, and laid hold of her husband's arm to steady herself. I caught Nelly looking our way, as though she would rather have joined us than stay with the captain, who seemed to be lecturing her.

M. Espinosa explained. I was "leeftenant," he said, and I considered the ship a fine ship, and that there was no chance of her drowning; likewise, I exactly knew all the sails, ropes, and spars, and as Marie had been anxious to learn all about the ship, he was sure the "leeftenant" would tell her everything she wished to know. He took about five minutes to say all this, and, as you may guess, expressed himself

in very different words from those I have conveyed his meaning by; and so having introduced his wife, he pulled off his hat and pranced over to Mr. Black.

As Madam Espinosa stood to windward of me her yellow hair blew my way, and with half an eye I saw that she was pleased I looked at it. However, in spite of her yellow hair, I was not particularly anxious for her society; for if she was good-natured, she was also very gushing and insipid, as I speedily discovered from her conversation. She plied me very handsomely with questions about the sails and other parts of the ship, and then told me she was an intense lover of the sea, and that she thought all sailors real darlings. (Murder! thought I, and looked at poor old Bolt, standing as stiff as a wooden Scotchman at a snuff-seller's shop door.) This was her first long voyage, and she was most anxious to see a gale of wind, although she was naughty to say so, as her husband was a fearful coward and dreaded tempestuous weather at sea. However, Byron's poetry and various novels she had read had filled her with curiosity to see the ocean lashed and the waves boiling, and she asked me with simpering earnestness if I thought there was any chance of our meeting with a real gale of wind before we arrived at Callao? I believed she was joking at first, but seeing that she really meant what she said, I answered that it was very probable we *should* meet with a real gale of wind between this and that port.

"My poor husband," said she, "is sure to be dreadfully alarmed; but *I* shall enjoy it. I wish he was not so afraid of the water. I wanted him to hire a yacht during our stay in England; but no, he would not hear of it."

I expressed my wonder that he should not have chosen a steamer, and a shorter cut to the west coast of South America than the Horn.

"Oh," said she, "it was my fault. He would have crossed to the United States and gone by land as far as he could; but," she added, tossing her head, "I told him that *I* should choose a sailing-ship and a long sea-voyage, and if that didn't please him, he might go in a balloon for all I cared, but I would go by water."

I asked her if she had ever been round the Horn, for I didn't know which end of the world she hailed from.

No, she had never been round the Horn; she had never yet been to Lima.

"It is not like yachting," said I.

"Do yachts never go round the Horn?" she wanted to know.

"If I may judge from the way in which some yachting men brag, I should say that yachts *have* been round the Horn, and further than the North Pole, to boot."

"I am very fond of yachting," said she.

"Why, yes, it is a pleasant amusement, and quite fit for ladies. Gilt buttons are always becoming, and smooth water makes sailing very easy; and with a high barometer and a harbour always under your lee, sailorizing can't fail to be enjoyable, especially when mixed up with plenty of champagne and the newest yachting modes. But I'm afraid, if the Solent were like the Horn, the yacht-builders would soon be starving."

The breakfast bell ringing at this moment obliged

her to release me, and she waddled over to her husband.

We were now off Beachy Head, heading about W.S.W. with the Sussex coast melting into a blue film as it ran away into Newhaven and Brighton. We had all the offing we wanted, with the wind holding in the quarter from which it had first come on to blow, and we could now let go the bowlines and ease off the lee braces. All to windward the water, as it ran in short seas and quick tumbles of foam, was ablaze under the brilliant sunshine; the breeze was very fresh, and a light white-painted ship on the port bow, that we were overhauling as though she had been a buoy, found a main top-gallant sail as much as she could carry; and when we passed her, her decks sloped towards us like the side of a hill. But the *Waldershare* was now under all the canvas that would draw, and standing alongside the pilot to windward, and looking aloft at the vast spaces of white cloths stretching in slender points to the yard-arms, with their hollows full of delicate shadows, the taut weather-leeches of the royals and top-gallant sails with a little shiver in them, like the sharp ripple of a flag steadily blowing, and the staysails ballooning in superb curves, and the shrouds and backstays standing like harp-strings, through which the wind was singing a merry chorus, whilst the big black tops threw shadows over the heads of the bright masts in which the light was glancing, and every now and again a little sea would strike the weather-bow and flash in smoke over the fore-castle, I thought our ship made a noble show, and was an object to fire the pride in every sailor's heart aboard of her.

By eight o'clock that evening we had backed the main-topsail, and lay waiting for a boat to take the pilot ashore. The Isle of Wight stood broad on the starboard beam, and I went to Nelly and whispered in her ear to take a good look at those cliffs, as they were probably the last piece of English land she was likely to see for many a long day. The sun was within a quarter of an hour of his setting, and the sky all around him, and the high summer clouds which swept athwart him, were as red as blood, whilst the water was a dark green surface that to leeward went pouring away to the looming and terrace-like cliffs, and the towering southern downs of the island that stood in a pink haze, though even at that distance the greens and greys and whites were visible. Fore and aft every eye aboard the ship was fixed on the land, and the feeling that the night would soon shut out every sign of the English coast, and that some among us might never behold the old home again, was strong in the minds of the Englishmen in the ship's company. The only sail in sight was the small powerful cutter that was heading for us close hauled, and that came driving down in a smother of foam. Even after the sun had sunk, the whole of the heavens down to the uttermost east held for a while the delicate crimson of its farewell light, and the stars were glittering windily even before this crimson melted out of the east, and died overhead, and faded into a long, narrow, but extremely vivid flush over the spot where the sun had sunk. As this flush vanished the coast line died out, and nothing was visible to the eye but the long stretch of dark waters. The moon was in the south, throwing a pale-greenish light upon the sea,

but the breeze had freshened after the sunset, and before the cutter came alongside we had hands aloft furling the royals and the mizzen top-gallant sail.

The pilot, with a bundle of letters in his pocket, among which was one from Nelly to Phœbe Johnson, after shaking hands with Mr. Thomas and me, and touching his hat with very surly civility to the skipper, dropped into the cutter cleverly.

"Man the starboard main-braces," shouted Mr. Thomas, and the great yards swung round. "Haul taut to wind'ard! Now get your main-sheet aft." The main-tack was boarded, a watch-tackle clapped on to it, and bowsed down to the tune of "Pull, my bully boys." The helm was put down and the ship brought to her course, and whilst the songs of the sailors were still echoing along her decks, and the wind among the sails was awaking a little thunder overhead, the *Waldershare*, leaning her nose down as a dog sides his head to make a better lever of his jaws, shattered the first sea she struck into an acre of foam, and started with a rush for the open waters of the English Channel and the great Atlantic deep beyond.

CHAPTER V.

AT SEA.

It blew fresh all that night, accompanied during the first watch with two or three squalls of rain; also veering westerly, which obliged us to brace sharp up in order to lay our course. But even with the leech of the top-gallant sail lifting, and a single reef in the two topsails, the ship smoked through the water at a

speed beyond anything I could have imagined; and by noon on the following day we were clear of the Channel, breasting the long Atlantic rollers, with the wind dead at south, and our yards hard against the lee rigging.

At breakfast that morning no passengers were to be seen. We did not carry a stewardess—indeed, very few passenger sailing-ships in the South American and Australian trade did in those days—and I had to get what news I could of Nelly from the steward, who told me that he had accosted her through her cabin door, and that her answer was—she did not want any breakfast, and preferred to remain where she was. So I made up my mind to lose sight of her for two or three days, during which time it should be my business to see that she was well looked after; but within half an hour of my coming on deck at noon, I heard voices on the quarter-deck, and looking over the poop-rail, to my very great astonishment and pleasure, I saw Nelly holding the hand of Mr. Thomas, who was in the act of conducting her up the poop-ladder. She was pale enough, poor girl; but she gave me a smile that, I think, rather astonished Mr. Thomas, and her fine eyes flashed as she glanced at the sea and watched the brilliant dance of the ship over the foaming water.

"I was afraid you were going to have a spell of sea-sickness," said I. "I am heartily glad to see you on deck."

"I *was* a little ill this morning," she answered; "but I am all right now,—and this is all I want to make me quite well!" she exclaimed, her nostrils dilating as she breathed in the sweet and sweeping wind, and grasping a backstay with her hand.

Mr. Thomas slued his little head on one side and squinted up at me, as much as to say, "How the deuce have you made her so familiar with you in this time?" after which he eyed her with an admiration that I dare say would have gotten him a cuff over the ear from his month-old wife, had she been there to see it. He was not so smartly dressed as usual, guessing, I suppose, that the ladies would not turn out. He seemed to think of this now, for presently, looking at his boots and waistcoat, he ran on to the quarter-deck, and we saw no more of him.

I fixed a chair for Nelly to leeward of the mizzen-mast, and fetched a big overcoat in which I wrapped her legs; and now she said she was quite happy, and not in the least sick,—and, indeed, I could see, by the dawning roses in her cheeks, what the wind was doing for her. The Espinosas' cabin was next hers, and from her account I guessed the Spaniard was undergoing a martyrdom.

"His groans are dreadful," she told me; "and I suppose his poor wife is too ill to help him, for I heard him shrieking out her name, but he got no answer. Afterwards he rolled out of his berth—for there was a noise in his cabin that gave me that idea. I imagine he is more alarmed than sick."

"Both, no doubt," said I, laughing.

I flatter myself that my being with her increased her happiness, but I never should have believed she would prove so good a sailor, nor so greatly enjoy the scene around her. There was not, indeed, much sea on, though the wind was what sailors call a top-gallant breeze; but there was a long Atlantic swell right astern which made the deep ship roll rather heavily,

and being close-hauled, each time she rolled to windward, she doubled the power of the wind, so that it tore through the rigging in screams like railway whistles, and boomed out from the bellies of the sails under the feet of them with a sound of thunder. The sky was a pale green over the horizon, and a steel blue overhead, and across it huge, wool-like clouds were stretching. The forecastle, wet with the spray that laced it, flashed in the sun, and now and again a head of froth would blow over the bulwarks into the waist, and scatter along the decks in big soapy blobs of yellow bubble. The watch on deck were at work on jobs in various parts of the ship, and their costumes of coloured shirts, canvas or serge breeches, caps of every description, and every man with a belt round his waist and a sheath-knife at his hip, increased the picturesque effect of the whole scene. To leeward was a large barque bound for the English Channel, with stun'sails aloft and alow, frothing the swell that sent her pitching and bowing onwards, with the Dutch flag blowing over her stern, and her copper glancing against the boiling water every time she tossed her heels.

"Who would not be a sailor, Will!" exclaimed my sweetheart, casting her beautiful grey eyes aloft and watching the royal-mastheads waving with stately motion to and fro under the flying clouds.

"Perhaps, after all, it's a gayer life than I sometimes think it, Nell. Yet no voyage that ever I have taken or am likely to go on will equal this one, and I am not going to tell you why."

"It will be one long enjoyment for me," said she. "Madam Espinosa is not a very brilliant lady, but she is good-natured, and I shall get on very well with her.

I only wish Phoebe were with us. I like your chief mate, too—Mr. Thomas; he is a nice little man, extremely polite, but how very, *very* tiny! But I do not quite understand Captain Flanders. Is he quite right, Will, do you think?"

"Hush, my dear girl!" I exclaimed, glancing aft and then down the skylight, to make sure no one was within hearing. "That is a dangerous question to ask. Considering that he is captain of this ship and lord paramount, I should be sorry to believe he is *not* quite right."

She looked somewhat abashed and frightened.

"I dare say you judge him," I continued, "as the pilot who left us last night, I know, did, by his religious talk."

"No," she interrupted, "not by that, although he seems to care for no other topic. His manner is curious, and his conversation is very often curious too; and his manner and his conversation put together are quite enough to make one think that he is not altogether rational."

"What was he talking about to you yesterday so earnestly?"

"About spirits."

"About *what*?" I exclaimed.

"About spectres and apparitions, Will. He believes in spirits, and spoke of one that visited him last week, and that told him what sort of a voyage we are to have."

"Good Lord!" I ejaculated, as the image of his egg-shaped head rose in my mind.

"He was so earnest at times as really to be alarming," she said, lowering her voice (with a little smile

twisting about the corners of her mouth as if she should say, "You see I am right, my dear, and although you frightened me by the way you said *hush!* you're beginning to find out that I'm the wiser of the two.") "He said that he was a Christian, but not a modern one. He was a primitive Christian; he disbelieved in clergymen, churches, archbishops, and everything like that, and assured me that several spirits had told him no prayers were listened to that were not offered in the way the early Christians prayed, namely, in caves and woods and in the open air. Now, Will, would not you think anybody cracked to talk so?"

"Cracked! I should think so, indeed!" said I, after a low whistle. "But for all that he may be a very good sailor and understand his business, and if so, his believing in supernatural spirits need not trouble us; for it is better for a sailor to believe in ghosts than in Jamaica rum, the spirit that has too many believers already among us. How do you feel now?"

"As if I should like to walk," she answered, with her face finely tinted by the strong wind, and bronze threads of hair blowing about her cheeks. However, it would not do for me to be seen walking with her, and I was quite sure that, audacious as her triumph over the demon nausea had made her, she would never be able to keep her feet; so I advised her to sit still and wait for lunch, which would be on the table at one; "and mind, Nelly," said I, "to ask the steward for a slice of real salt junk and a sea-biscuit, and a glass of bitter beer, as I don't suppose you would like to drink cold grog, though that is the correct brew for shipboard; and, depend upon it, old Neptune will

appreciate the compliment you pay him in calling for his time-honoured victuals, and will immediately hail you as a first-class seaman, proof against the most monstrous seas and the wildest weather."

The crew went to dinner at half-past twelve. The cook was a cockney, a fat fellow in tight dungaree trousers, and arms and face like veal after it is "blown" by the butchers to hang in their shops. Like most sea-cooks, and indeed like most men who get their livers swollen by standing before ovens all their lives, he was a very irritable man, and on this, the very first day of our being at sea, his temper led to something very nearly resembling a riot.

One of the boys was in the act of quitting the galley, holding in his arms a mess kid full of smoking meat, when, as I assumed, he gave the cook some saucy words; anyhow, I saw the cook's leg fly out of the galley and deal the boy a kick at the moment when the ship rolled heavily to leeward. The boy flew head over heels into the lee scuppers, and the meat bolted out of the kid as he flopped down; but the same roll of the ship likewise propelled the cook (who had got more way on him than he could manage, through the jerk he had given his leg) clean through the galley door; he tumbled over the boy, and there they lay wallopping and floundering upon the deck, in the midst of the steam from the pieces of meat, which jumped all about them as they flung their arms and legs about. The boy roared murder! and I sprang off the poop and ran forward; at the same moment the hands came tumbling out of the fore-castle, where they were waiting hungrily for their dinner, to see what the matter was.

The cook, gathering himself up out of the scuppers, exclaimed that the boy had "sarsed him." This the boy, who stood blubbering, being indeed badly scalded about the right ear, admitted, but said that the cook had brought it on himself by calling him a bad name. The men in the port watch, however, to whom the kid of beef belonged, casting their eyes upon the pieces of meat which washed about in the scuppers, or lay jammed among the rusty links of the chain-cable, began to understand that they stood to get no beef for dinner that day, and called upon me to know what was to be done. I said I would speak to the captain, who would no doubt order a fresh supply of meat to be served out; but the cooking of it would keep them waiting two hours, so that the best thing they could do was to get the starboard watch to share their meat with them, and they must share their "duff" by way of return: enough for all hands might be made out in that way, and the fresh rations would be ready for them by supper-time.

This proposal led to an argument as noisy as an Irish parliament. All hands were now assembled to leeward of the galley, some of them kicking the meat about with their feet, and they looked a very formidable body of men. There are two periods when sailors are proverbially ill-tempered: when they are hungry, and when they are newly aroused from sleep. In this case the men were hungry, and as each man in my watch honestly believed he could eat up all that the appetites of his mates were likely to leave him, there was a great deal of grumbling over my suggestion. However, there was common sense in it, and it prevailed at last; and I went aft to get the

skipper's leave to order the steward to serve out another dinner of meat to the port watch.

But the men only waited until my back was turned to fasten upon the cook; they drove him out of the galley and got him under the port forecastle ladder, and here they pelted him with the pieces of capsized meat, their temper rising with the progress of their revenge, until, conceiving that they would end in pitching him overboard, he started out of his corner with a loud yell, burst through the men like smoke, and came pelting into the cuddy, streaming with grease and sweat, followed by all hands, who, however, stopped short at the quarter-deck capstan.

It happened that Mr. Thomas, hearing the row going on forward, and not a little alarmed by the shout uttered by the cook before he fled, threw open his cabin door, and ran out just in time to meet the cook, who, coming up tilt against him, sent him floundering on his back; the cook pitched over him, striking the Espinosas' cabin door with a crash that produced a loud cry from the terrified Spanish merchant, who was evidently under the impression that some dangerous accident had befallen the ship.

I saw all this as I was making my way to the captain's cabin, and nearly suffocated with laughter at the expression on the little mate's face as he got up and wiped the grease off his cheek and clothes. He was *blue* with rage, for he valued his clothes more than his dignity.

"What is all this uproar about?" exclaimed the captain in his deep tragedy voice, throwing open his door.

"They want to murder me, sir!" gasped the cook.

"They've threatened to slit my throat, sir! they're a-waitin' to dash open my 'ed, sir, and scatter my hintellects!" he cried, making his case, with the cunning of cowardice, a desperate one, that he might be sure of the captain's support.

He certainly looked a dreadful object, with great lumps of fat sticking in his hair, and his face beautifully lined with the grease of the meat, that, having been rolled about by the feet of the men, had gathered from the deck and cable-range, as you may believe, a very pretty variety of dirt, and his fat body quivering in his blue shirt like a jelly in a napkin.

"What's dat? Murder? Coot troats! Split open haid—eh! eh!" shouted a voice, and the Espinosas' cabin door flew open and out bolted the Spanish merchant. He plumped up against the cuddy table with the roll of the ship, and gazing around him with an eye bright with terror, stood for some seconds staring at the cook and then rushed up to the captain, leaving the door of the cabin, in which his wife lay, wide open. He had nothing on but a day-shirt and a pair of silk drawers, and it was perhaps fortunate for me that my astonishment at the magnitude of the results following the trifling accident of a capsized mess kid overpowered my sense of the ridiculous.

"What is dat I hear, captain?" he sputtered. "Murder! cut troat! Valga me Dios! what do he do here?" pointing to the cook. "Que es eso, que es eso? peu!" and grabbing at his stomach he tumbled upon the deck, too sick to stand.

"Antonio! Antonio!" shrieked his wife; "where are you, Antonio? Do you know you have left the door open, you cruel creature, and everybody can see me?"

Hereupon, to cut this matter short—for really my heart ached for the poor lady who lay exposed in her bunk—I sprang round the table, collared the Spaniard, bundled him neck and crop into his cabin, and shut the door upon him.

“What is the meaning of all this?” exclaimed Captain Flanders, addressing me with a great sternness of manner, though all the same I do not think any one could have failed to notice the look of indecision and even alarm in his face; “and what are all the men waiting for yonder?”

I told him what I knew of the incident of the mess kid.

“They’re a-waitin’ to murder me, sir!” quavered the cook.

“Nonsense!” shouted little Thomas, whose Welsh blood was glowing in every fibre, and whose face was as red as a powder-flag. “That fat ruffian knocked me down in his terror, Captain Flanders—sent me sprawling, sir, covered with his infernal dripping—and if the men boil him in his own coppers, by the Lord! he’ll get no more than he deserves.”

“Mr. Thomas, I am surprised to hear such language from you, sir. I won’t allow it, sir! It shows a spiritual neglect that’s intolerable to me to witness in a man of education and an officer in the mercantile marine,” exclaimed the captain, waving his arm with a most impressive gesture, and scowling down upon the little man.

Here the Espinosas’ door was opened a couple of inches, and the Spaniard thrust out his long nose.

“Captain, captain!” he quavered. “Has he gone yet? que demonio! que demonio!”

"Do, Captain Flanders, lock this door, please; he'll be exposing me again, captain!" called out Madam Espinosa.

However, Antonio had twisted his nose round to command the cuddy, and encountering the eyes of the cook fixed upon him, he slammed the door instantly, and I heard him rattling away in his native lingo to his wife, who gave it him back pretty hot, as I am bound to confess.

Mr. Thomas made no reply to the skipper's very offensive and unnecessary rebuke, but repeatedly glanced at him with bitter indignation, whilst he endeavoured to get rid of some of the grease upon his waistcoat by rubbing it with a pocket-handkerchief.

"What are you doing aft here?" I shouted to the cook, longing to kick him for the bother he had brought upon all hands. "Leave the cuddy this moment, sir! Away with you forward!"

"Look there, captain!" he answered, pointing to the quarter-deck; "they're all a-waitin' for me; it's more than my life's worth to go forward, sir."

Captain Flanders paid no attention to what he said, but addressing Mr. Thomas with a burst of irritability, exclaimed, "I desire that you will not stare at me in that way, sir. Give me leave to tell you, Mr. Thomas, that it is ungentlemanly and offensive, and a sign of low breeding, sir, to stare at any one as you are staring at me!"

At this speech Mr. Thomas's wrath seemed to desert him, and cocking his eyebrows at me in such a way that it twisted his little face into a complete note of interrogation, he slued himself round and disappeared in his cabin.

The captain walked aft.

"Pray, sir," I shouted, "what am I to do with the men? The port watch haven't had any dinner. Shall the steward serve out some more beef to them, sir?"

"Act as you think best, Mr. Lee," he replied with great blandness. "Your judgment will direct you." And to my very great astonishment, he entered his cabin and shut the door.

I went on to the poop and sung out to the men, several of whom had gone forward, that the captain had ordered a fresh supply of meat to be given them, and that in consideration of the starboard watch sharing their beef with the men in the port watch, I would take it on myself to order grog to be served to all hands; but on condition that they gave me their word not to further molest the cook. This proposal raised a cheer among them, and whilst they all lay aft to drink the grog that the steward handed to them from the quarter-deck capstan, the cook went forward and not a word was said to him.

I made Nelly laugh with my description of Espinosa's fright and the scene in the cuddy, but the significant part of the incident I kept to myself—I mean the extraordinary conduct of Captain Flanders. Presently the tiffin-bell rang and she went down to lunch, promising to ask for a piece of salt beef as I had advised, and to whiten her teeth upon a sea-biscuit.

The breeze had somewhat moderated, and was now blowing dead from the west; the ship was laying her course, and could well carry all the sail I chose to give her. The reefs were shaken out of the fore and mizzen topsails, the royals set, and the fore-topmast stun'sail run up. The extra pressure sent the old

hooker swirling through it nobly. On either bow the foam stood up like snow-hills, and rushed glittering and creaming aft, as though churned up by paddle-wheels. The swell was broad on the starboard quarter, and when the ship's head sank to the rise of it aft, the green sea was frothed a dozen fathoms away beyond her bows; and as her stern came down again, you could see the stun'sail boom buckle, and every sail swell out as though a gale had taken it, whilst all along the poop the brasswork quivered with fitful flashes, bright as the sunlight in a mirror, and the tiller chains clanked harshly as the green seas poured away in a roar under her counter.

I did not see Mr. Thomas again until he came on deck to relieve me, and then I stayed a few minutes to exchange some words with him. His Welsh spirit still fretted angrily over the treatment he had received in the cuddy, and he complained bitterly of what he spoke of as the "unwarrantable insult" that had been offered him.

"Bolt, the pilot, also complained of his having insulted him," said I. "Did I tell you, Mr. Thomas, that the captain gave him a tract to read upon profane swearing? That is his hobby, and I don't say it isn't a good one, only he has no right to affront people with it."

"I'll tell you what it is, Lee; I'm beginning to believe my friend was right when he told me that the skipper's father hanged himself."

"There's no doubt that Captain Flanders is eccentric," said I.

"Ay, damned eccentric!" he exclaimed with a scowl, looking aloft.

"He believes in spirits and primitive Christianity, sir, and says that people ought to pray only out-of-doors. But I don't think, Mr. Thomas, that we should consider a man cranky for holding views we can't understand or decline to accept. He *may* be right, and if so, then it is we who must be cranky for not agreeing with him."

"For the matter of that, he's welcome to believe in anything he likes," growled the little man; "but any belief that makes him think himself entitled to insult me before a greasy lubber of a cockney sea-cook won't suit my book, and whether he's right or not in his ideas, I shall never believe that his head-timbers are sound."

"Still, do you know, sir," said I, "that I do believe he is a good man at bottom, and means the right thing. His sending me away in the boat the other night to the French ship might have been unseamanlike, but it proves him a humane man, and we ought to let that score heavily in his favour, sir, seeing the stuff that a good many sea-captains are made of nowadays. His notions of swearing may be a little too strict for ship-board, but it's better to be out of your reckoning too far to windward than too far to leeward—that's my way of thinking."

"But what on earth did he mean by telling me not to stare at him?" the little man shouted, as red as fire over the thought of it. "Did you hear him call me ungentlemanly and low-bred, and wanting in manners and the Lord knows what besides for so doing? *I*, who can trace my descent to Ap-Thomas the bard, a real chieftain, Mr. Lee, who lived three hundred years ago, and one of whose forefathers was a prince, by jingo!"

I had thought this the worst part of the whole business, and it was the only part that had given me real uneasiness. However, I made him no answer, for, in truth, neither of us had as yet had any time to form a solid judgment, and I believed no good would come of alarming each other.

At this point we were interrupted by the captain coming on deck, on which, with an expression of uneasiness, Mr. Thomas told me I had better go below; and down I went.

During the afternoon a large schooner had been made out, with nothing but her topsails visible above the horizon on the weather quarter. She was heading S.E., and we were heading S.S.W., and consequently before I quitted the deck we had risen her hull. At four bells she was about a couple of miles away to windward, and she was then seen to be a long, large, exceedingly beautiful schooner yacht, of certainly not less than two hundred and fifty tons burden, the very handsomest vessel of her class I had ever set eyes on. I thought she had meant to cross our stern, and was watching her with great interest as she swept like a swan over the long rollers, her copper bottom gleaming like dark gold under the green surges, which fell hissing and boiling away from her bows, whilst her sails, as white as milk, swayed with the airy grace of a gull's wings against the Indian blue of the western evening sky, and the sun flashed in her streaming ebony-black sides as she yawed to the great ocean swell that chased her, when she suddenly hauled her wind and headed on a course directly parallel with ours.

"Hillo!" thought I, "she wants to try her speed with us."

Through the glass I could see some ladies aft, watching us, with a number of gentlemen, and forward was her crew, a whole mob of smartly dressed sailors. All the canvas she could show was packed on her. She had got the wind as we had, abeam—not her best sailing point, perhaps, but it laid her port bulwarks almost flush with the water; and through it she tore, the spray flashing in smoke over her nose, and her decks and hull all in a quiver with the play of the sunshine on them.

She was fore-reaching on us fast. I could easily imagine that this effort to pass us was the result of an after-dinner wager, and certainly the gestures and movements of the gentlemen were full of excitement. I stood with Nelly, and Mr. Thomas looking at her over the weather poop-rail.

"Why, Mr. Thomas," said I, "we mustn't let her beat us!"

"But suppose we can't help it?" quoth Mr. Thomas.

"Lord, how she smokes through it!" I ejaculated, and I ran my eye aloft at our own canvas; every sail was drawing, and as round as the side of an apple.

Captain Flanders stood near the wheel, now and again turning his head to glance at the yacht, but evidently taking very little interest in the race. I could see the hands forward gazing aft at us eagerly, as though wondering that no orders came to them, for we could have set at least three more stunsails, if no more; and what *they* would have done for the *Walder-share* we could only have waited and seen. But the skipper made no sign, and so we had to watch ourselves being beaten.

Our own speed was not less than ten knots, and

the yacht I calculated could not be doing less than thirteen. Presently she ran up her distinguishing flag—a square with yellow ground, and a horizontal arrow. However, we could make nothing of this, not having a reference book.

“Hoist the answering pennant,” sung out Captain Flanders; and as I went aft to bend the flag on to the signal halliards, he said, “She’ll be hailing us in a minute, and she can read our name.”

It was a wonderful and beautiful sight to see her flying along the water, with her white decks bare to our gaze as they seemed to lean almost up and down to us; sometimes lifted high on a green swell, which she dashed into foam where it took her, then sinking behind a long, high, emerald-bright ridge that hid the whole of her hull, whilst her slender wake trailed away into the toppling seas astern, like a long thread of silver; though I dare say she found us a noble sight too, with our vast spread of symmetrical canvas soaring into the sky, and the whole beautiful hull exposed as it leaned away from her, laying bare a broad length of shining copper, and dashing off the seas in tall fountains of foam which were as full of colour as a prism.

When she was almost abeam of us they gave her a wide sheer; this brought her so close that the faces of the people aboard were distinctly visible. The ladies consisted of two very pretty young women and a matronly looking old dowager. There were no less than five gentlemen, one of whom, a tall, handsome young man in a blue jacket, thrown carelessly over a white flannel shirt, hailed us.

“We’ve read your name on your stern. Your hull

is a beautiful one, and you ought to be a fast ship; but the *Violet* can show you any road you want to take."

"Answer him, Mr. Lee," called out the skipper, possibly afraid of being "chaffed" before the crew, who were crowding the forecastle, and giving my voice the preference over Mr. Thomas's, which certainly had not much carrying power.

"We're bound round the Horn; will you pilot us?" I bawled through my hands.

I could see them all laughing as he shook his head.

"If you were bound to a warmer climate," he answered, "we should be happy to call in and tell them you're coming."

"We should like to know the name of the owner of that yacht?"

"Lord——," he shouted back.

"Is his lordship aboard?"

He nodded and waved his hand, on which I pulled off my hat, and he returned the bow.

"If I could come near enough to you," he cried, "I'd throw a case of champagne on board; but you must take the will for the deed. Where are you bound to?"

"Callao. And you?"

"Gibraltar. A prosperous voyage!"

And as he said this, the yacht's helm was put down. We instantly forged ahead. Then she put her helm up, eased off her sheets, and ran under our stern, the ladies waving their handkerchiefs and the gentlemen their hats, which salutations we returned with hearty good will.

"Bound to Gibraltar, eh?" grumbled little Thomas. "That's the sort of sailing I should like. Plenty of champagne and cigars, eh, Mr. Lee? and nothing to do but to read novels and be blown along by the wind."

"I am afraid Captain Flanders is going to be polite," exclaimed Nelly, with a glance over her shoulder, and looking down at the chief mate with a pout. This was true enough, but then she had seen him coming. He gave her his arm, and as he led her away, I heard him congratulate her on being so good a sailor.

"Lee," said Mr. Thomas, looking after her, and then giving me an interrogative squint, "what a very fine, frank, charming woman Miss Maitland is!"

I started at the name, but recollecting myself, said, "Very."

"I tell you what it is," said he with a grin; "you and she have met before. No nonsense! You're old friends."

"We are," I answered; and I thereupon told him as much of the story as I thought it necessary he should know. I explained that she and I were engaged to be married, and that she had resolved to take this voyage with me.

"Well, there's nothing odd in that," says he, pulling his beard; "but the idea isn't a bad one, and if I had thought of it, and could have mustered the money, dash my wig if I wouldn't have shipped my wife in the same way. Nobody could object. Any woman may take a passage in a ship if she pays for it. But you were groaning to me the other night over the hardship of having to leave your sweetheart, although now you say you knew she was coming."

"Did I say that? Well, it was my awkward way of expressing sympathy for you. Your description of your feelings at having to leave your wife affected me, sir. I thought you would feel comforted if I put myself with you in the same boat, Mr. Thomas."

"Well, well," said he, looking mystified, "when a man's in love, he's bound to contradict himself. But it's no business of mine. You've got a plucky girl for a sweetheart, and I hope you'll treat her well, Mr. Lee. Only take my advice, and don't let the skipper get scent of your romance, or you'll set him writing tracts and neglecting the ship's reckoning, and he'll be down on you tooth and nail for being immoral enough to love anybody but yourself." He cast a vindictive look in the direction of the captain.

"All that the skipper knows about it," said I, "is that Miss Maitland and I were acquainted before we met on this ship, and that she herself explained to him." I thought it best to speak of her as Miss Maitland. It might have complicated the romance too much for Mr. Thomas's sympathy to have told him that she was sailing under false colours.

"I suppose you know," said he, "that the skipper's a widower?"

"I did not know," I answered; "but I should have been more surprised to hear that he had got a wife living."

This sarcasm was too fine for Thomas.

"You must take care, Lee, that he don't go and fall in love with your sweetheart," he continued, with a grin so broad that it was impossible to look at it without laughing.

"That won't make me uneasy," I answered. "In-

deed, I rather wish it would happen, for it would double his anxiety that she should be comfortable."

"Ay, but suppose," said he, thrusting his little hands into his waistcoat pockets as though he strove to subdue the occasional heave of internal mirth that convulsed his minute frame—"suppose, Lee, he should find out that you are her sweetheart, and turn to and grow jealous, eh? and sulk over you in his cabin, and plot a diabolical scheme to get rid of you, eh, Lee? Ha! ha! Why, love stops at nothing—let Miss Maitland witness to that beautiful idea!"

"She'll have to believe in spirits before he falls in love with her," said I, looking at Nelly as she paced alongside of the skipper on the weather side of the poop, holding on to his arm, whilst I could hear his deep voice sounding in a muffled growl, and his left arm working like a pump-handle. It was not to be supposed that the mate's suggestion could make me very uneasy; yet it did flash upon me that if the skipper *should* fall in love with her—and the amiable manner in which she listened to his talk about spirits and primitive Christianity was as likely to win him as anything I could imagine—my sweetheart's position would be a rather embarrassing one.

CHAPTER VI. •

THE FAG-END OF A CYCLONE.

ON Wednesday we were in latitude 40° and longitude about $16^{\circ} 5'$,—some two hundred miles to the eastward of the Azores. The fresh westerly breeze had given us frisky heels, and we had rolled through the Bay of Biscay into the broad bosom of the North At-

lantic, with our fore-topmast stun'sail set day and night, and with no other meddling with the running rigging than the occasional hauling taut or slackening of the weather-braces.

By this time both Madam Espinosa and Mr. Black had got, or professed to have got, over their sickness, and were often on deck, and even occupied their places at the cuddy table, though their appetites were small; but the poor Spaniard's stomach was still anywhere but in its right place, and when he came on deck shortly after noon on this Wednesday, for the first time since we had cleared the English Channel, he presented one of the most ludicrously pitiable figures mortal foreigner ever cut at sea.

To begin with, his wife had pinned around his head (at his own request, no doubt) an immense blue silk handkerchief or shawl, as big as a flag, rolled up into the shape of a turban, the ends of which fell down his back as far as the small of it. Under this turban his huge hooked nose stuck out like a signboard; his face was as yellow as a guinea, and the contrast of it with the blue of his head-gear did not add to his loveliness, as you may believe. He wore a long flapping bright-green dressing-gown that descended to his ankles, and below sprawled his feet, thrust into a pair of long yellow slippers with toes of highly varnished red leather. As this extraordinary figure came slowly up the companion, moving upwards in fitful jerks, which were produced, as I found, by his wife who followed behind, and was helping him with an occasional shove, the man at the wheel, a grim, unshaven salt, gazed at him for some moments with his mouth wide open, astounded and even alarmed by the extraordinary apparition, until

the truth dawning upon him, he gave vent to his feelings in a loud yell of laughter, and, as if to show how utterly unable he was to control himself, spat his quid clean overboard.

However, the fresh air did the poor fellow some good, for after a bit he began to look about him, and hold out his long yellow claws to the sun, that was hot enough to suit even a negro, though when now and again the vessel gave an extra pitch—like a capering colt startled into a wilder frisk by a gad-fly—he would lay hold of the arms of his chair and deliver himself of a deep groan. I have seen old sailors, as seasoned, you would have thought, to every possible motion of a ship as their stomachs were to salt junk, as sick as dogs in short cross seas, or when lying roasting and rolling upon a glassy tropical ocean; but I never suffered from sea-sickness in my life, and so I do not pretend to know what the feeling is like; but no experience of it in others ever brought me so near to comprehending the horrors of it as did the face of the Spaniard, as he sat to-day in his blue turban, groaning and toasting himself in the sunshine.

I went up to him out of civility and asked him how he did.

"Bad," said he; "varee bad!"

"Oh, you'll get over it soon," said I, cheerfully. "You must eat, my dear sir—force yourself to eat: you never know what's going to ease you." He held up his hand, but not understanding the gesture, I went on: "The captain of the last ship I was in always endeavoured to get his passengers who complained of sea-sickness to eat. 'Try forward, and then try back again,' he would say. 'First taste this, then that: if

boiled mutton fails, pickled pork may succeed; and if pickled pork don't do——’”

“*Cuidado!*” yelled the Spaniard, and I had just time to hop aside.

“Bo’sun!” I shouted, “send a hand aft here with a swab and a bucket of water.” And I quitted Mr. Espinosa with a very sheepish face. Evidently I was not the kind of physician he wanted. Indeed, he called his wife and begged her to entreat me not to approach him again until he was quite well: a message she delivered with a good deal of bluntness, though I believe she did not mean to be offensive, but that she thought I would be tickled by her girlish candour. I know nothing more uncomfortable than a middle-aged woman who gives herself the airs of a maiden and gushes on trifles, just as if people were blind and could not see that she was altogether too old for enthusiasms. I could scarcely forbear laughing in this poor lady’s face when I glanced over her hull, that was as motherly as a chubby-sided South Seaman, and peeped at the corner of her eyes, where the powder lay snug in the crows’-feet, whilst she was giggling away as if she was not yet turned forty, and feigning a rapture over everything, whether she thought it tiresome or not. I did not notice that she gave her husband much of her attention: but I am not going to blame her for that; she had scarcely got over her own sea-sickness; and really, when I looked at the poor guinea-coloured creature, with his nose that cast a shadow upon the deck as big as a flying-jib, and his long saffron-tinted fingers, which the rings somehow made extraordinarily ugly, and the skin of his throat like an old piece of parchment covering a whipcord frame, I could not but think that she

deserved some credit for not having drowned him months before, or ridding herself of him in some other way; for she, at all events, was a presentable woman, whereas he was the ugliest man that nature ever let loose upon the world.

I had returned from giving some directions to the ship's carpenter, and was standing on the weather side of the poop close against the ladder, glancing aloft at the canvas and admiring the spread and set of it, and then looking down at the ship's side, the green of which gaily matched the glorious blue of the sea, divided as they were by a broad line of foam through which the copper shone with sudden glancings of dull golden light as the ship lurched to leeward, when Captain Flanders walked slap up to me and stationed himself by my side.

"The barometer is falling, Mr. Lee," he said, "yet the weather looks settled."

"Yes, sir, it looks steady enough all to windward, though I don't know if that haze to leeward means anything."

He stooped his head so as to see the lee horizon under the foot of the mainsail. "I forgot to ask you the other day," said he, rearing his body slowly, and confronting me with his long, gaunt face, and speaking in his deepest tones—"but my memory is not what it was—whether in the unhappy quarrel that took place between the cook and the crew there was any bad language used?"

"I didn't hear any, sir," I replied.

"I presume not," he exclaimed, fixing his gloomy eyes full on my face; "otherwise you would have re-

ported it to me, as you have received my orders on that subject."

"No, sir, I can't say I noticed that any bad language was used."

"What sort of a disposition have you observed among the crew?"

"They seem a very steady, willing crew, sir——"

"I don't mean that," he interrupted. "Do they seem a thoughtful crew?"

"Upon my word, sir," I replied, a good deal puzzled, "I really can't say."

"I have been wishing to deliver them a series of lectures on religious subjects, Mr. Lee, but am willing to consult you before I do so, because I am by nature a very sensitive man; and if there are any blasphemers or impious men forward, I should not like to subject myself to their jeers, although," he muttered, striking his hands together, "my misgiving shows a deplorably weak heart—a heart for which the noble apostolic example has done nothing, nothing!" and he stamped his foot heavily on the deck.

"I am flattered that you should think fit to consult me on this subject, sir," I answered, "but I should prefer not to give an opinion."

"Speak out!" he exclaimed angrily. "I consult you as one of my officers, and I expect that you *will* give me an opinion."

"May I first ask," said I, pretty considerably taken aback, "what are the subjects you propose to lecture upon, sir?"

His eyes lighted up, and he inclined his head towards me with an eager gesture.

"On the existence of spirits," he exclaimed in a

low, very earnest voice. "I have twelve lectures by me on that subject, written by myself, in which I prove that the air we breathe is full of spirits. But understand, Mr. Lee, before the material eye is qualified to behold and the ear to hear these spirits, the heart must have faith; and it is that faith I wish to impart to the ship's crew, if—if——" He wandered, as if in search of a word, and then stopped dead.

I thought this strange talk for a sea-captain to hold to his officer, more especially with a falling barometer below. How the dickens came this man to get command of a ship? thought I; and as I ran my eye over the noble fabric and thought of the number of lives over which he had as much control as any imperial despot, the significance of his craziness smote me violently.

"You have demanded an opinion from me, sir," said I, after waiting a few moments to see if he had anything more to say, and observing the look of abstraction in his eyes, "and I will give it: I don't think the men would understand your lectures, and indeed, considering the work they have to get through, and the rough, hard life of a fore-castle, I don't think they would thank you for any sort of lectures. When on deck they ought to be at work, and when below they want to turn in."

That's blunt enough for him, anyhow, thought I, and the plain truth too.

"I was afraid so," he exclaimed, folding his arms. "And, after all, can we expect the vulgar and the uneducated to receive the light, when those who are cultivated and have minds to reason with refuse to heed it?"

"No sir," said I, "and that's why I think you would only be wasting time in trying to put ideas into the heads of the men yonder."

"I am afraid you are right, Mr. Lee, and I am obliged to you for your opinion." So saying, he was about to walk aft, when he stopped and said, "Miss Maitland tells me you knew her before you joined this ship."

"I did, sir," I replied, colouring up a trifle and stealing a glance at Nelly, who whilst pretending to listen to Mr. Black, was looking our way and evidently thinking of us.

"She is a charming person—a most intellectual woman," he exclaimed with great energy. "She seems thoroughly to understand my views, and one convert I am certain of."

I stared after him as he walked away, not taking any note (as Mr. Thomas might have sworn I did) of what he said about Nelly, but thinking over what should be done if his madness increased. Here we were only seven days out, and in that time I myself could see that his eccentric conduct and language were a great deal more pronounced than when in the Channel, though even they were apparent enough to detain my attention. Whether the state of his mind was known to the men I had as yet had no means of ascertaining, and I was not going to commit so rash an act as to make inquiries among them; but I am now persuaded that they suspected nothing neither at that nor at a much later time. The passengers, with the exception of Nelly, having been sick and confined to their cabins, would have had no opportunity of judging him; indeed, if even Mr. Black were sharp

enough to penetrate the truth, it would be necessary for the captain to converse with him about spirits and primitive Christianity, as he had conversed with me and Nelly on those subjects, before the Scotchman could arrive at any conclusion, and then would not he suppose that Captain Flanders was eccentric merely on these two points? Madam Espinosa had not, in my judgment, sense enough to know a madman even when she saw one; and the Spaniard as a foreigner, would accept everything as illustrative of the character of the British seaman. Hence, so far as I could judge, the secret was known to or suspected by myself and Nelly only; for Mr. Thomas himself had as good as told me that he looked upon the skipper's talk as a mere trick to deceive and make fools of some of us. As I have said, I wondered over and over again how any firm of employers could have entrusted command of a valuable ship to such a man. But so many causes operate in such matters that no conjecture can ever hit the exact truth. He might have an interest in the firm, or he was a connection of one of the partners, or maybe no suspicion that his mind was diseased was felt at the time when he was appointed. I had never a character for being curious, and in those careless young days I took things as they came, and never troubled myself to look into them. Hence I am unable to say more about Captain Flanders than what I can find in my recollection of him. Difficult as his character and manners are to convey by the pen—indeed, I may say I have found it impossible to approach in writing the impression my mind carries of him—I have thought proper to do my best with his story, that the reader may understand that travellers

by sea are exposed to other perils than those which are contained in the stock hazards of tempest, fire, and mutiny.

Before I went below at four o'clock I noticed that the set of the swell, which had been running all day steady from the westward, had veered right round to the northward, and had become heavier. This was a circumstance of such rare occurrence that in all my life I have only met two seamen who could recall a like experience. At the same time the wind hauled forward, blowing S.W. by S. This obliged me to brace the yards sharp up, and even then we were some points off our course. There was no appearance of dirty weather. The haze to the eastward had lifted and the sky was a bright blue; with a few rainy-looking clouds stretching across it, their shadows sailing in slate-coloured patches across the leaping waters. The pitching of the ship, however, made the decks extremely uncomfortable, and proved altogether too violent for poor Espinosa, whose chair capsized under him; he tumbled over in such a way that the tails of his dressing-gown got foul of his head, and away he rolled, like a man in a sack, until he was brought up by a hencoop, which he struck with a thump that set all the hens cackling in a fright. His wife laughed at him, but Nelly, with more humanity, sprang forward to his assistance, and whilst she cleared his head of his gown, I got him on to his feet and led him back to his chair, which I fixed against the mizzen-mast, and secured by a turn with a rope's end.

I observed another fall in the mercury when I went below at four bells. This was the second dog-watch, and I was not disposed to lie down; so, freshening

myself up a bit with a hair-brush and a towel, I went on deck again, to be with Nelly if possible, that is, if the skipper left the poop, for, as I have said, I made a rule of keeping away from her when he was looking on. It was very warm and the breeze dropping fast, but there was quite enough wind to keep the sails full, though you could have told the decrease in the ship's speed by the *slopping* sound of the water alongside. Our decks looked as clean and smart as a man-of-war's, and all aloft taut, and the sails set, and the yards braced to a hair. No ship ever put to sea with a better boatswain than the one we had. With his silver whistle slung round his neck, his bronzed face peering between an enormous pair of bushy whiskers, his great hairy arms ringed with bracelets and scored with crucifixes, stars, and other devices of that kind, bared to the elbows, his open shirt revealing his mossy breast and his full, muscular throat, the skin of which below the collar-rim was as fair as a woman's hand, Mr. Sinnet, the boatswain of the *Waldershare*, was a fine specimen of the English merchant sailor, with a voice like a hurricane, an eye for the minutest stain on the ship's deck, full of sympathy for sailors and their grievances, of which his mind held a catalogue as long as a mainyard, and a knack of keeping the men under him perpetually at work without "hazing" them, as the Yankees say.

In most ships all hands are employed on deck during the afternoon: this was the case in the *Waldershare*, and the crew knocked off work in the second dog-watch. All the men were now on deck, the boatswain leaning against his cabin door, smoking and yarning to the carpenter, who squatted on a bench in

the doorway; the steward arranging with the cook about the cuddy dinner, in the galley, from the chimney of which the smoke poured downwards, striking the water under the foot of the main-topmast stay-sail and blowing away on the top of the waves; whilst on the forecastle the men hung in groups—here one of them putting a patch into an old pair of trousers, there another greasing his sea-boots, some listening whilst one read aloud from a fragment of an old newspaper, others conversing with short black pipes, the bowls of which were inverted, in their mouths, as they leaned over the forecastle rail watching the green water coiling away from the ship's side, hissing like a serpent as it ran aft. Now and then from the interior of the forecastle came the sound of the scraping of a fiddle. As I watched the man reading from the old bit of newspaper, I smiled to think that here we were sailing away from England and Europe, and that for months, perhaps, we should hear no news of what was going on there; that in our absence kings might die, new constitutions be created, wars declared; and that ashore all the people would be thinking what wonderful times they lived in, and boasting of the changes which must make their period a famous one in history; whereas we should come home and see no change anywhere, only a few more houses built, and some remembered faces missing, whilst the people still went about their work, and the sun looked down upon the same old scenes and interests. I suppose it is our vanity that causes us always to think *ours* the great age of change. But it makes the sailor laugh when he comes home to hear how much has happened and to see how little things have altered.

When dinner was served in the cuddy we all of us, including Espinosa, took our seats at the table, Mr. Thomas remaining on deck. I invariably noticed that the captain seemed easier in his manner when the chief mate was away, and this evening his talk—though, to be sure, he did not talk very much, after all—was so sensible, that I should have defied any one to suppose he was not in full possession of his faculties. He predicted that we should have a storm before twelve hours had passed, and said that this heavy swell from the northwards was full of meaning to him. And then he related to Nelly his experience of a typhoon in the Bay of Bengal; how, about an hour before sunset, the sky all away to the *eastward* was blood red, and the sea like an ocean of cochineal, and how this dreadful redness lasted till nearly midnight, during which time every one on board looked as if he had been painted over with vermilion, while the whole sea was on fire with phosphorus, and spread out like a vast surface of glass, licked underneath by long green and blue and white flames.

I had witnessed a spectacle much resembling this when becalmed off Antigua, and therefore knew he had not exaggerated in his description of it. Nelly, however, sometimes glanced at me, with a faint incredulous smile, as much as to say, "Will, another hallucination, poor fellow!" yet for all that she listened to him with a great deal of interest. Indeed, he seemed to have hit the topic that suited his hollow face and glowing eyes when he talked of red skies and blue and green fires, and as he went on in his deep voice, with Nelly listening to him, I thought of the Ancient Mariner and the Wedding Guest.

The cuddy being well aft, the pitching of the ship was felt in its full force; the bulk-heads creaked furiously; the crockery in the steward's pantry rattled with an occasional smash; now and again might be heard the grind of the rudder, and the dull thunder of the swell as it struck the ship heavily under the counter; the swinging trays would plunge out of reach; plates slid fore and aft; knives and spoons tumbled into one's lap or on to the deck with a clatter, and I had to calculate the moment when to lift a fork to my mouth, in order that I might not drive it into my eye or my ear. In short, everything that wasn't lashed fetched away; and, among other things, Mr. Black, against whose chair a sudden lurch had propelled the steward, and over they both toppled, dragging the table-cloth half off with them. The Scotchman crawled on his hands and knees into his cabin, and shutting the door upon himself with a loud slam, gave vent to his feelings in an uproar that instantly *did* for poor Espinosa, who, though eating nothing, had been manfully holding on to the table and giving battle to his nausea, as we most of us saw by his rolling eyes; but the moment he heard Mr. Black, then, as a war-horse pricks his ears to the notes of a trumpet, he started up with a convulsed face, slued around with outstretched wandering hands, and dashed, or rather fell, headlong into his cabin, where he was presently followed by his wife, who for some minutes had been sitting with a handkerchief stuffed into her mouth.

"I should like to go on deck," said Nelly, looking very pale; and really, the sounds which now issued from the cabins, to right and left, might have disordered the stomach of a whaling captain. In a moment the

skipper got up and offered her his arm, and after lingering a few moments to swallow a glass of sherry, I followed them.

The wind was fast dying away, and the sun was going down into a bed of clouds that had risen whilst we sat at dinner. The captain handed Nelly to a chair, and I noticed him standing at the wheel, looking steadily into the west, as a man might who had reason to know that something was to be expected from that quarter. "After all," thought I, "if he has not his wits about him, he has enough to relieve those under him from much anxiety." Mr. Thomas had vanished, and looking through the skylight, I saw him eating away heartily with his arms squared, deaf to the complaining sounds in the cabins. I asked Nelly how she felt.

"Quite well again. I am always well in the air."

"The sun looks angry, doesn't he?"

"And beautiful too. See those lovely colours streaking the upper portion of the clouds there."

"I am glad to find the captain looking at the horizon with a rational eye. He seemed as sound as an oyster-shell at dinner."

"Yes, he did," she answered; "but he is *not* sound, Will. As he led me on deck, he said that a spirit had told him we were going to have a storm."

"God help him, then," said I. "I give him up after that." I left her with something like a feeling of real disappointment. I had quite hoped I had exaggerated his craziness, but this piece of information threw me all aback again, and maybe I was now disposed to think him madder than he was.

The clouds in the west were fast growing into a magnificent spectacle as they rolled slowly up to meet

the sun, that was sinking towards them. As yet they were detached, though they stretched the whole length of the western horizon; but just below them was a solid, motionless line, so exactly resembling a coast, that it was impossible to see it and not for the moment believe it land. It was of a livid colour, as though the great vaporous masses of front cloud obstructed the light of the sun from it, and against it the horizontal swell ran in outlines, like dark-green hills, whilst on the hither side of these running liquid lines, the sea caught the red light of the sun and shattered it into fragments of lurid crimson, which it seemed to hurl right and left upon its surface. All the edges of the upper clouds directly looking up to the sun were tinged with a deep crimson border, that faded into amber as it crept towards the centre; and this rich colour was again followed further down by a kind of yellow brightness, like the sheen of pale gold, but the centre and the skirts of the clouds were dark, graduating from slate into a livid gloom, corresponding with the motionless range behind. I never witnessed a grander, nor, indeed, a more awful sunset, nor beheld at once so great a number of rich, defined colours; for it must be remembered that on either hand of the sun the clouds, as they stretched to the north and the south, gathered a variety of lovely tints, so that even the remotest clouds had a pink effulgence in them, mixed with pearl and delicate orange, whilst the sea all to starboard was equally full of colour, being a lively green near the ship, but as full of shifting hues as the dolphin until it reached the great stretch of dull reddish light thrown down upon it by the sun, and which the waves, as I have said, tore into fragments, and tossed on their

summits as though flames were running up through the surface of the sea out of the depths of it. It was strange that the captain should have pictured much such a scene as this at the dinner-table, though he could not know that it might be seen by going on deck, as all this splendour had gathered whilst we sat in the cuddy. Did it portend a cyclone? We might hope that we were scarcely far enough south for that kind of gale, the very worst a ship can encounter.

The men forward seemed fascinated by the sunset, and stood looking at it in a crowd on the starboard side of the forecastle. We had all plain sail set, and the starboard studding-sail booms rigged out. Suddenly the wind utterly failed, and the canvas pealed against the masts and rigging with reports like the discharge of a hundred small fire-arms. Mr. Thomas was now on deck, looking at the sunset.

"There's a gale of wind there," said he, "but we shan't have it yet; the rain must come first."

"Get those stun'sail booms rigged in!" sung out the skipper, "and clew the royals up and furl them."

The necessary orders were given, and the light canvas melted in the calm blue overhead, like summer clouds in the eye of the morning sun.

"Haul down the flying jib, and send some hands aft to stow the crossjack!"

"Hillo!" thought I, "the spirits are growing nervous."

"A sail on the starboard beam!" shouted a voice from the main-topmast cross-trees.

"What does she look like?" bawled Mr. Thomas.

"Why, like a glob o' blood, sir."

"Mr. Lee," exclaimed the captain, "take the glass

with you into the maintop and see what you can make of her."

I fetched the glass, sprang into the main rigging, and gained the top. I steadied the glass in the top-gallant rigging, but the ship was rolling so abominably, that it took me some minutes to fix the vessel. I then found that nothing below her topsail yards was visible. So I clambered up to the cross-trees, and from this elevation she was distinct enough. The swell on the horizon sometimes hid her, but I soon had my report ready.

"She's a small barque, sir, snugged right away down to her topsails, which are close-reefed; and they're either reefing or furling her foresail, and she's pitching as I never before saw any vessel pitch!" I bellowed, making my voice reach the deck with extreme difficulty, for the canvas was rattling about me as if a lot of nine-pounders were being discharged all around in the air.

"That'll do, Mr. Lee!" shouted the chief mate. "Lay down, sir!"

However, I stayed a minute or two to look around me. The view of the sunset was not half so fine up here as from the deck, owing to my being able to see from my elevation a very tall breadth of the bank of livid cloud below the illuminated masses; but the tumbling sea, along which the heavy swell was rolling, the tops of which, burnished by the sultry calm that had fallen, were lucent with the red western glare, whilst in their hollows the deep violet shadows strongly defined the movements of the sea to my eye, looking down from my great altitude, presented a grand scene, in the midst of which lay the long, narrow hull of the

Waldershare, plunging heavily, shattering the water in foam all about her stern as her counter came chopping down into it, while her decks shone with the red light that fell slanting from the west, and red fires gleamed in the glass of the skylights and in every piece of brass, and her people looked like pigmies.

"Clew up the top-gallant sails," I heard the skipper sing out as I dropped over the futtock-shrouds into the main rigging; and as I alighted on the top of the bulwark, Mr. Thomas called to the boatswain to pipe all hands to shorten sail. I thought this a sensible move on the part of the skipper. All hands were on deck, it is true, but only the watch were doing the work; by snugging down whilst there was daylight, and putting all the men to work while they were on deck, would save a deal of trouble later on, and was an order sure to please the crew. The clear notes of the boatswain's pipe echoed high above the heavy flogging of the canvas, and in a few minutes both watches were hard at work, letting go halliards, hauling out reef-tackles and running out along the yards. We had enough hands to reef all three topsails at once when there was no wind, and soon the men were on the yards passing the earrings and knotting the reef-points. The usual conditions of reefing were wanting in this instance—the ship flying through the water, the gale ringing through the rigging, the water hissing and boiling around her, the pealing canvas bending the spars like withes, and wringing the very mast-coats off the decks; nevertheless, there was noise, and even excitement enough, for on each yard the spirit of rivalry ruled strong. Each gang wanted to be the first done, and it was a lively sight to see them come tumbling

off the yards into the tops, and sliding down the backstays, or dropping down the rigging to be first at the halliards, and singing out before the others should be down from aloft.

By the time the topsail halliards were belayed the sun had gone, the advanced clouds had lost their glory and, merged into the solid wall behind, stood up to a great height in the sky, which was of a sickly red that extended far into the east, where it became a sort of ash-colour. I never remember beholding a more portentous aspect of the heavens. The red haze had faded out of the air, the sea was rapidly growing dark, and the night was closing in fast. There was not a breath of air, the atmosphere was oppressively hot, and we felt it the more now that there was no canvas to fan the decks. With the exception of the three close-reefed topsails, the foresail (that was hauled close up to the yard), and the fore-topmast staysail, the vessel had not a rag of canvas showing, and she looked as forlorn as poor Espinosa in his silk drawers, as she rolled her naked spars to and fro, to and fro, under the lurid and threatening sky. Having no steerage-way, she had fallen off, and the swell was right abeam, with the black cloud-bank astern; but luckily within the last hour the swell had considerably moderated, and the ship in consequence was a good deal more habitable, though it was still difficult to keep one's footing without holding on with the hands.

"We're snug enough now, any way," said Mr. Thomas to me, pulling his hair over his ears and smoothing down his waistcoat. "But we shall be soaked first before the wind comes to dry us. Hillo! that was a bright flash! Gad! that looked typhoonish, Mr. Lee!"

He was gazing astern as he spoke, and I forward; but though I had not seen the flash where it leapt, I judged its ferocity by the brilliant greenish glare that filled the whole of the sky.

"The skipper seems to know what he's about," said I.

"Why, yes," he answered, shortly.

"I think he got an idea from that vessel to windward."

"Very likely. I heartily wish the voyage were over," he exclaimed, pettishly. "It's the most uncomfortable berth I ever filled. Neither as third, second, nor chief mate have I ever before been thrown with a skipper who eyes me when I speak to him as if he would like to cut my throat."

"I confess I don't understand him," said I.

"It's not good form for officers to discuss their captain, I know," said he; "but when you've got a skipper like Captain Flanders to deal with, what can a fellow do but cruise round and round him? He never consults me; he never seems to like me to speak to him. Does he think I don't know my work? Would he like to make out that it's three turns round the long-boat and a pull at the scuttle-butt with me? If he lets the men get that notion into their heads, I may as well go below for the rest of the voyage."

"I don't believe he's responsible for all he does," I answered. "What do you think of his telling Miss Maitland that a spirit warned him a storm was coming?"

"Ay, ay, he's a plaguey good hand at spirits: but take care that he isn't tom-fooling us with his damned ghosts. Longshore dodges to get officers into a hole are pretty common nowadays, I've heard. You'll never make me think he believes in what he says."

I could not help smiling at this notion; at the same time I felt sorry for my little shipmate. There was no doubt he had good reason to dislike the skipper, who made a point of treating him with great rudeness, never addressing him at meal-times, nor conversing with him on deck, and barely giving him civil words when spoken to by him; but much of his resentment sprung from disappointment. I believe he had counted upon getting command of the *Waldershare* this voyage, and it was undoubtedly mortifying to a man who had been in the service of the owners of the ship for some years, to find a stranger chosen out of another employ and put over him. However, he had let fall one hint that I made up my mind should profit me, when he said it was bad form for officers to discuss their skipper. We had opened ourselves too much as it was, and apart from all instinct of discipline and respect, I considered that I might criticise Captain Flanders once too often, and so get professionally ruined; for, whether mad or not, he was captain, and could do what he liked aboard his own ship—break me and send me forward to work with the men, or clap me in irons in a cabin under lock and key.

It was now eight bells, and my watch on deck. There had been no more lightning, but it was very dark, with a most curious red haze in the north, so deceptive that one only saw it fitfully and by looking at the sky to the east and west of it. There came a few languid stars into the south, but sea and sky were as black as ink astern; not a breath of air, the swell greatly fallen, and the sea alongside like ink, with a few tremulous green fires shooting out into it when the vessel rolled.

All this time Nelly had remained on deck. The captain being away, I went over to her, not having had a chance to speak to her before.

"I see we are going to have a storm, Will. How fearfully dark it is! Did you see that great blaze of lightning about half an hour ago? The whole sky seemed to open."

"Well, you are not frightened?"

"A little—when it lightened; but I was more frightened to see you go up the rigging. I held my breath, and my eyes swam in watching you."

"If a sailor can't climb he's of no use, Nelly. But see how heavily the dew falls. Look at the lamplight glistening on the arm of this chair. It is too damp for you to remain on deck. Besides, the cuddy is more cheerful than this sky and sea. Don't let either lightning, thunder, or wind frighten you. Things which are really dangerous make very little noise as a rule."

She rose; it was very dark. I pressed her to my heart and kissed her; it was the first kiss between us for a long while. She was very reluctant to leave me, but I led her to the companion, and pressing my hand, she went below.

I crossed over to see how the ship's head lay; and as I raised my eyes from the compass card the whole sky was torn from horizon to horizon by a terrific flash of lightning. It was as desperate a flash as ever I remember seeing. It was like a mighty lance of blue flame hurled sheer across the sky, vanishing into the eastern heaven; and the whole surface of the ocean glanced in the horrid glare like a spectral world issuing out of chaos. I closed my eyes, but so frightfully vivid had been the blaze, that when I opened

them the darkness was intense. I was temporarily blinded; I could not even see the card that lay illuminated by the binnacle lamp. There was a solemn, hollow, distant peal of thunder; I was surprised by the smallness of it in comparison with the magnitude of the flash. "I never see the like of that before, sir," exclaimed the man who stood at the wheel, steadying the spokes with his elbow whilst he rubbed his eyes. All was as still as the grave again; not a sound could be heard but the sobbing gurgle of the water washing under the counter, with the flap of the invisible canvas aloft. Captain Flanders came up to where I stood.

"I don't like the look of this at all," said he, in a voice the deep notes of which were amazingly in keeping with the profound darkness. "Better get the mizzen-topsail furled whilst it's calm."

I gave the necessary orders in a low voice, and the watch came aft, groping their way, and after a bit clewed the sail up, but without singing, and went aloft. Presently they came down, all as quiet as possible, and went forward, and the decks were silent again. The galley was locked for the night, and the only light forward was the haze thrown by the light in the boatswain's berth; aft, the cuddy lamps glimmered on the skylights, and the binnacle diffused a little circle of soft radiance, that fell in a delicate haze upon the wheel and the motionless figure standing at it. The skipper walked to and fro quietly; I went forward to the break of the poop and hung over the side, watching the strange shapes of green and blue fire that flickered and coiled through the water, sometimes resembling serpents chasing invisible prey, sometimes twisting into forms like trees. All overhead was a

ponderous darkness full of dreadful silence; the stars in the east had vanished, and it was now impossible to tell the point in the sky which the front line of the great cloud-bank had reached. Presently a few large drops of rain fell; they struck the deck heavily and were as hot as blood upon the hand; they ceased, but I thought I might as well take the hint they gave, and slipped into my cabin as fast as my legs would carry me for my oilskins.

Phew! the cabin was stifling hot and the smell of the oilskins sickening. There was no one in the cuddy, and I hoped Nelly had gone to bed. Let her sleep now while she could; for the barometer—a wiser spirit than the captain's familiar, was prophesying weather that would waken the sleepers presently.

Just as my foot touched the poop-ladder, there was another flash of lightning, as blinding as the one I have just described, and it fell from right overhead; the air was filled with a strong sulphureous smell; the electric fluid ran down the ties, chain sheets, and along the jackstays, and they looked as though they were on fire; some one cried out, but in what part of the ship I could not tell. I believed that we had been struck, and bounded on to the poop, and then came a crash of thunder, after an interval of not more than three seconds, worthy of the terrific blaze that had preceded it. I thought it would never cease; it went booming along the glassy sea as though it were some enduring sound rushing from horizon to horizon. The captain was standing at the head of the port poop-ladder, and as I came up he shouted out, "Forward there! is any one hurt?"

There was a few moments' silence, and a man answered, "There's no one hurt here, sir."

"This is frightful," said he, coming over to where I stood, and in the reflection of the cuddy lamplight I saw him remove his hat and wipe his forehead. "Did you hear a cry just now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, you did!" he exclaimed in a tone of relief. "I was afraid I might have been the only one who heard it."

"Some one sung out in fright, I suppose, sir."

"No doubt. I wish something would happen to change this dreadful darkness and silence. How's her head?" he called out.

No answer came from the wheel.

"Wheel there, I say!" he shouted; "how's her head now?"

"Has he fallen asleep?" I exclaimed, and went aft. "Why don't you answer?" I said, addressing the man, who stood erect, holding on to the spokes with both hands. "Didn't you hear the captain hail you?"

Finding him still silent, I lost my patience, though I wondered that any man should sleep in that erect posture, and I shook him by the arm. He retained his grip of the wheel, but neither moved nor spoke.

"Why, what's the matter with him?" exclaimed the captain, who had followed me. "Pull the lamp out of the binnacle and look at his face."

The lamp thus exposed cast a brilliant light, and I threw it full upon the man's face.

"Merciful God!" I cried.

The lips of the man were drawn tight back into a dreadful smile, laying bare his gums and teeth; his

eyeballs were turned right up into his head, and nothing was visible but the whites of them.

"The last flash has killed him!" I exclaimed, recoiling with a shudder from the terrible sight, and I replaced the lamp in the binnacle.

Scarcely had I done this when down came the rain. It fell just as if the whole ocean had come aboard. It plumped upon us in a sheet, beating me on to my knees with the weight of it, and in an instant the poop was awash, and I could hear the torrent sluicing through the scupper holes, whilst the sea lay white and hissing around. The captain appeared helpless—he neither moved nor spoke. The suddenness of this discovery had made him quite vacant.

With a dead man at the wheel, whose grip of the spokes was not to be shaken off, the ship was doomed if the gale burst suddenly upon us. I sprang forward and at the top of my voice roared out, "Lay aft, here, men! aft here for your lives!" and then ran back again to the wheel, where, seizing hold of the dead man's fingers, I succeeded by sheer force in opening them, whereupon the body fell heavily on to the deck. It was wrestling with a corpse; but with a corpse in which one would have said the English spirit of faithful duty lingered even after the spirit had fled. Never shall I forget the touch of those wiry, dead fingers, the grip as tough as steel, the snap of the bones as I tore open the fingers, and the body falling with a *thud* that sounded above the thunder of the rain upon the hollow deck.

The whole of the starboard watch came splashing aft, dashing the water from the deck with their feet as they ran.

"Lanyon has been struck dead by the lightning," I sang out. "Lay hold of the wheel, one of you, and the rest carry his body forward and lay him on the fore-hatch, with a tarpaulin over him."

They stood wondering and alarmed a moment, then one of them laid hold of the wheel, and others picked up the body and away they went, whilst the rain fell in a broad sheet and the sea all about us sobbed under it. I saw by the binnacle light that the captain was ploughed through with the rain: his hat was sheer pulp, and fallen all on one side, and his feet squelched in his boots as he moved.

All on a sudden the rain ceased, just as you might stop a shower-bath. A little air came blowing from the south.

"We're aback, sir!" I shouted.

"Hard aport!" he exclaimed. "Round with the after-yards."

But before I could sing out, the light air died and the main-topsail flapped heavily.

"Hold on all, is it, sir?"

"Ay, but we shall have it in a minute. Look astern!"

I did so, and beheld once more the faint reddish light in the sky, which gave me almost a shock to behold, for the like of it I had never witnessed amid such a darkness as now surrounded us. But under this sky was the sight the captain had bid me look at; it was a long luminous line of a colour, or character rather, it would be useless for me to attempt to express; but what it most resembled was a nebulous haze, or the tail of a comet, the hue extremely ghastly, as though it were a wall of spume illuminated by blue-light, or a long high reach of foam filled with shooting

phosphorescent fires. It broadened and came rushing down upon us with incredible swiftness. Some moments before it reached us I heard the roar of it sounding through the silence about us, which nothing on this side disturbed but the flapping of our canvas.

"Hands by the topsail sheets!" shouted the skipper, his voice rising almost into a shriek; but before the words were well out of his mouth, the sea was all in foam on either side of us, and the furious blast was yelling in our ears. I toppled down before it for all the world as if I had been skating and my feet had slid away astern of me; and I suppose I was blown a dozen feet along the slippery deck before I brought myself up. The white water filled the air with a kind of light, and I saw the skipper flat on his buttocks. He did not attempt to rise, but howled out, "Another hand aft to the wheel!" and I delivered the command, though jammed by the wind so hard against the brass rail of the poop that I could scarcely muster breath enough to echo him. The force of the wind was beyond all reach of words. I saw one of the men come aft in response to the order, and all was well with him until he got to the top of the poop-ladder; then the gale took him, and blew him head over heels on to the quarter-deck again, where he alighted with a splash, for that deck was still afloat with the rain. However, he was not hurt, but tried again, and reached the poop flat on his breast, and in this manner crawled aft like a worm.

Looking astern it was not possible to breathe. The wind blew one flat. It hit me in the stomach like a strong fist and stopped there, and there was no relief until the back was turned to it. Its bellowing was as

if a thousand wild bulls were being swept through the air and roaring in rage as they went; and this was a sound that rose high above, and had no relation to the sweeping shrieks in the rigging and among the spars. The sky was full of this tremendous bellowing, and it was one of the most terrifying incidents of the storm. No such sound is ever heard ashore: what one hears there is the groaning of wind in the chimney-pots and amidst trees, or its plaintive cries as it rushes down the mountain sides and howls along the valley; but all these various sounds have no resemblance to the roaring noise that such a wind as I am describing makes at sea. The ocean was a complete surface of foam; under the black sky it lay like a land covered with snow; the hurl of the gale had flattened the very swell, and along the hissing surface rushed the *Waldershare* with half her bowsprit under water, as though the wind would drive her bow under, but as steady as a sleigh speeding along a level Canadian tract.

Could this be a cyclone? It had all the taste and fury of one. Neither the captain nor the chief mate had expected the gale for twelve hours, yet here it was full on us and the first watch not over. I tried to crawl aft to see how her head lay, but though I was on my hands and feet it took me all five minutes to get the length of the poop; for the wind was like the hands of a giant on my shoulders, forcing me down and back, and the foam was flying over the stern of the ship as thick as a fog, and laced my face as though some one were slashing me with a whip.

The ship's head was due south; the skipper still squatted under the lee of the grating abaft the wheel, and I had to get hold of the grating on the port side

to prevent myself from being blown forward. Indeed, right aft where I now was the full fury of the wind was felt; it seemed strong enough to blow the ship out of water, and yet, whatever the wind's speed might have been, the ship was rushing forward at not less than fourteen knots; and so I leave you to guess what the force of the gale was at this time when I say that, though our own pace was taking fourteen knots out of its volume, its power was great enough to lift a man off his legs and blow him forward as though he were a piece of paper.

If this were a circular storm—and there was no reason to doubt it was—there were two ways of dealing with it; one was by avoiding the dangerous centre, and the other by heaving to on the right tack and letting the wind blow itself away. If the rules laid down for this sort of gales were correct, then the centre of the cyclone should bear about E.; and that this was a cyclone was presently shown by the ship's head gradually revolving as we ran, so that, being dead before it, we were now steering S. by E. half E. We were well within the outer radius of it, and keeping our yards square would sail us round and round in it like a ship on the edge of a whirlpool.

The skipper got on to his feet and came over to the compass; he had been dismasted of his hat, and his hair blew out in a straight line. He thrust his head down to look at the card, made an ineffectual attempt to look astern, and then bawled out, "We must heave the ship to, sir. Call all hands and get the fore-sail and fore-topsail furled, and haul down the fore-topmast staysail."

I let go the grating, and the wind ran me forward

like an arrow; the sea was now beginning to rise, and the heads of the waves on either side blew sheer off and over the bulwarks, and met in the air with flashes; they looked like darts of blue fire streaming through the darkness. I went forward shouting out the orders, and presently the shriek of the boatswain's pipe mingled with the bellowing overhead. I stood on the forecastle while the men went aloft. It took the whole strength of the ship's company to furl each sail. The canvas stood up above the yard like a stone wall, but it must yield at last, and I heard with a feeling of relief the chorus raised by the men as they triced up the bunt of the topsail. Whilst they were hauling down the staysail I took a look aft, being well under the lee of the foremast, that somewhat broke the fury of the wind. Though it was as black as ink overhead, not a cloud-break visible, yet, as I have said, the boiling water made a light in the air, and the outline of the ship and her spars, as high as her top-gallant yards, could be clearly made out. To right and left of her, and sheer over her stern, the water was flying like smoke, and great lumps of foam as they fell on her deck gleamed and winked like glow-worms. The ship in the unearthly light looked spectral, a wild, flying, and torn shape, her narrow band of close-reefed topsail—the only fragment of canvas showing—glimmering overhead, and her dark outline plain upon the pale spume. There was a storm and thunder of foam under her bows, for she was piling the water as high as her cat-heads, and pitching heavily to the sea, that was now waxing furious.

“Lay aft here and man the port main-braces!”
pealed the voice of the captain; and we all tumbled

aft, wrestling with the wind as we went, and catching hold of whatever came in our way to haul ourselves along. The helm was put down as the mainyards were braced sharp up, and the vessel came round, shipping one heavy sea as she did so, which filled the decks with a smother of froth, whilst it was up to the men's knees in the lee scuppers. The fore and mizzen yards were braced hard up against the weather rigging, and the ship was now hove to on the starboard tack, plunging heavily over the seas, which came rolling in small mountains down upon her, and sometimes so burying herself to leeward that the end of the fore-topmast studding-sail boom now and again harpooned the water.

"Go below the port watch!" was now the cry, for there was nothing more to be done.

CHAPTER VII.

LANYON'S BURIAL.

WE might have imagined that the gale had reached its utmost fury almost as soon as it fell upon us, but by midnight it was blowing a dozen hurricanes in one, with a heavy Atlantic sea running. It was no longer pitch dark, though the sky looked all one cloud, and there was no more lightning. The fall of the barometer had been from 29.80 to 27.60, a total fall of 2.20! Shortly after midnight there was a rise.

Meanwhile the *Waldershare* breasted the sea nobly, considering that she was loaden down to within a few inches of her chainplate bolts, and could we have lightened her I believe that she would have danced over the very spray in the air, and have kept her decks dry through the gale. But how can

any ship that is loaded flush with the mainhold with hardware and metal rails act well? The seas poured over her before she could rise to them; forward she was like a pier-head, so stiff and obstinate did the dead weight in her make her; and the water swept over her forecastle in whole seas, and ran up her sides in columns as high as her main-top, where the wind overmastered them and blew them right across the decks and a hundred fathoms beyond in a veil of smoke.

I went below at midnight dead tired. I stood a few moments under the break of the poop to exchange a few words with Mr. Thomas, for there was no chance of making oneself heard anywhere else. He said he was afraid that the cargo was straining the ship severely, but that she was magnificently built, with a wonderful deal of life in her, and further, he believed that the gale would soon blow itself out, for, from the sudden rise in the barometer, he inferred that we were only just inside the outermost line of the storm-circle, and that our being hove to would bring us out of it shortly.

I asked him if he did not think the captain had shown judgment in the manner in which he had made ready for this storm, and in which he had handled the ship since? He said, "Yes, he could not have done more," and then went on to the poop.

A decanter of rum swung on one of the trays, and I took a wine-glass and helped myself to a dram before entering my cabin. The motion of the ship was felt more in the cuddy than on the poop. On deck the excitement inspired by the bellowing of the gale, the yelling of the rigging, the thunder of the seas as they burst over the ship, took one's thoughts away from

her motion; and the violent uproar around was, so to speak, independent of her pitching and rolling. But in the cuddy it was different; here every sound was caused by the motion, or nearly so, and one's attention was directed to it. The groaning and creaking of the bulkheads, the shake and rattle of the cabin doors, the long-drawn grating of the straining timbers, coupled with the hollow thunder of the seas as they struck the ship outside or fell in tons' weight on her decks, filled the ear with an uproar that I am not ashamed to confess even disturbed my own seasoned mind with a subdued sense of dismay, whilst the trays depending from the upper deck swung to an angle of forty-five degrees and sometimes more, and the planks underfoot slid away from one's toes as though they meant to leave one floating in the air.

With my back firmly planted against the table, I swigged off my dram of rum, and had just replaced the glass when the door of the cabin occupied by the Espinosas flew open, and the Spaniard whisked through it as if fired from a cannon. He struck the table heavily, and vanished under it. I was afraid that he had seriously hurt himself, for it was evident that he had only intended to open the door with the intention of seeing if anybody was about, and that he had been thrown headlong by the lurch of the ship. He rolled under the table against my legs. I lifted him up groaning, and set him against Mr. Black's door, where I "fixed" him by grasping his shoulders with both hands, otherwise he would have fallen again. He was in his dressing-gown, but his head and feet were bare.

"I hope you are not hurt," said I. "Why have you left your cabin? You are much better in it."

He rolled his eyes about and made some answer in Spanish, which of course I did not understand.

"Let me tell you," said I, shouting in his ear, "that the ship is in no danger. A heavy gale is blowing, but she is snug as good seamanship can make her, and well watched; and if that don't satisfy you, Mister Espinosa, I'll be hanged if I know what will. Here, let me put you into your cabin again."

Just as I pronounced these words Mr. Black turned the handle of his door; the door opened inside. My whole weight was against Espinosa in order to keep him in his place, and his back was pressed against Mr. Black's cabin door; consequently, when the door was opened, we both pitched into the cabin, I on top of the Spaniard, who, to save himself, caught hold of Mr. Black's legs and down he came; and there we all three of us floundered, grabbing at one another in such a manner as to prevent ourselves from rising, whilst my streaming oilskins soaked my fellow-strugglers through and through.

"What the deil's *this!*" roared Mr. Black, in a voice *deep* with fright. "Let go of my leg, for God's sake! Dom it! the man's nipping me with a pair of scissors!"

This must have been Espinosa's finger-nails, for the truth was (I hope my blushes will be excused) Mr. Black had nothing on him but a night-shirt and a pocket-handkerchief tied around his head, the ends meeting under his chin. Here the ship lurched heavily to windward, and away the three of us rolled, then down again to leeward, until she seemed almost on her beam ends, and off we started afresh. Releasing myself from Mr. Black's embraces—for he had got his

arm most lovingly and tenaciously coiled around my neck—I staggered on to my feet, and catching hold of the Spaniard's claws, unshackled them from Mr. Black's leg. No sooner was the Scotchman erect than he sprang into his bunk, with the back of his shirt hanging in two rags from his shoulders, and hauling the sheet over him began to parley with me from his pillow.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion, Mr. Lee?" he shouted. "What business have you and that—that wretched foreigner in my cabin, sir? Here is my leg bleeding like a pig with his cursed scratches!" and he forked a stout peg out of bed, and pointed to half a dozen long red lines along his shin.

"We were talking against your cabin door, and you opened it and we tumbled in," I answered, like to suffocate with laughter over this silly business. "I hope you are not hurt by this unfortunate accident, Mr. Espinosa?"

"Hurt!" cried Mr. Black; "I wish he had broken his dom'd neck for tearing the flesh off my bones! Can't a passenger open his door without a couple of boobies bursting into his cabin and skeening him alive, eh? Answer me that for yoursel', you Meester Spaniard!" And wrapped up as his head was, he glared on Mr. Espinosa like an infuriate old witch.

"What you call my neck, eh?" suddenly shrieked Espinosa, greatly to my surprise, for I had thought him half-stunned. "Who are you yourselve, you beeg ogly rascal, eh? who are you yourselve—answer me dat!" and skipping up to Mr. Black, he snapped his fingers under his nose in an ecstasy of passion.

This was more than I could bear; so, leaving the

two passengers to settle their own quarrel, I bolted out of the cabin, threw off my boots and oilskins, and pitched myself on to my mattress, where I lay laughing until I fell asleep.

The gale proved but a short-lived one after all, though, judging of its central force by the taste we had of its outer limit, I should imagine that had the ship been a few leagues further to the eastward when the storm burst upon her, she would have foundered. That it was a rotatory storm was proved by the sudden shifts of wind veering from N. to E.N.E., but without any regularity, blowing first great guns from one point and then thundering down upon the ship from another. When I went on deck, at four o'clock in the morning, there was a tremendous sea running, but the gale was fast blowing itself out; the clouds lay in fragments overhead and sailed slowly across the sky, while among them the stars flashed with a sharp, tremulous glittering, showing that above the lower stratum of cloud was a range of high, small, frost-white cloud that was passing away to the westwards, right athwart the path of the gale.

The sickly dawn broke upon a dismal scene. The ship had as strained and battered a look as if she had been tumbling about in a gale of wind for a month; the foresail and fore-topsail had been furled anyhow in the dark, and lay on the yards in lumps of canvas, kept in their places by the hastily passed gaskets; all the running rigging was blowing away to leeward in semicircles; the main-deck was like a pond, and with every roll of the ship the water rushed from side to side, dashing against the bulwarks and smothering everything in foam; the top-gallant fore-castle was

all awash, the green water toppling on to it and pouring in cascades on to the deck below; no sail being set forward, the ship all that way looked naked, and her long bowsprit and jibbooms forking out, danced their black outline up and down the sky.

By six o'clock the gale, blowing right from the east, had so far decreased that I was able to set the close-reefed fore-topsail and storm trysail; this extra canvas steadied her amazingly, but though she was ratching somewhat now, I kept her close to meet the sea, albeit had we headed our course we should have carried the gale on her port quarter.

By seven o'clock it was blowing a moderate gale and the sea had greatly fallen; so we squared away the yards and made sail, and presently the ship was swirling through it with a top-gallant sail set over a single-reefed topsail, heaping the water ahead of her as high as the hawser-holes, whilst the foam poured over the spritsail yard.

The watch now turned to to clear up the decks and wash down. This was a job the ship wanted badly, for nothing makes a greater mess aboard a vessel than a gale of wind. By breakfast-time the ship was clean and taut fore and aft, her decks drying fast in the sun, the hens cackling cheerfully in their coops, the pigs grunting under the long-boat, the reefs shaken out, the main-royal set, the sea fast going down, and a piebald sky with a lacing of glorious blue over the mastheads.

After breakfast I stood under the poop-break smoking a pipe; presently Mr. Black came on to the quarter-deck, looking very yellow, and asked me how

I did after last night's rough work. I thought this mighty civil after the disturbance in his cabin—indeed, I had every moment been expecting a summons from the captain, to whom I made sure the Scotchman would complain. He then said he thought an apology due to me for the rude manner in which he had spoken last night; he had found out from Espinosa's explanation that the fault was not mine; he had opened the door, having heard my voice and wishing to ask some questions about the storm, and we had tumbled in; but he had made peace with Espinosa, though he was still of opinion that the Spaniard had clawed him out of malice. However, he had clapped some plaster on his leg and lost the pain, and as he believed it was an accident not likely to happen again, he wanted no fuss made over it. So there was an end of the matter, and I was saved the trouble of explaining to the captain. Mr. Black did not tell me how Espinosa and he had made up their quarrel. I had run out when the Spaniard had snapped his fingers under Mr. Black's nose, and could only suppose that the insult would have led to a pummelling match. A set-to may, indeed, have taken place; though it is more likely they begged each other's pardon when my back was turned, for what with the gale and the groaning of the ship, and being drenched with my oilskins, and rolled upon the deck, they were both nearly frightened out of their wits.

I was still lingering in the sheltered part of the deck I had chosen, my pipe in my mouth, very often glancing into the cuddy, on the look-out for Nelly, who had not left her cabin, when I saw Mr. Thomas go forward. The watch had just been setting the

fore-topmast studding-sail, and the men who had been rigging out the boom were coming leisurely down the rigging. It was at this moment that I all on a sudden remembered the death of the seaman last night by lightning, a circumstance of which the gale appeared to have swept the memory clean out of my head, so inveterate in the sailor's heedlessness, and his knack of forgetting in five minutes events which would score the mind of the landsman with life-long impressions.

I instinctively guessed the chief mate's errand, and I was quite right, for as he came back he stopped to tell me "that poor devil Lanyon is to be buried at two bells" (meaning nine o'clock). I looked at my watch, and found it wanted only twenty minutes of that time. "It is the captain's fancy, though I think he might as well have waited until eight bells, when all hands will be on deck;" and so saying, he passed on.

A funeral is always a solemn thing at sea. It is not that sailors think so much of the death of a mess-mate, as that a familiar face is missing; there will be one voice the less to join in the chorus at the halliards; his gruff voice and laugh will be heard no more; his pipe lies broken on the deck, and is extinguished; his bunk is empty, though there is his name carved on the massive beam over it. Bill is gone, and the watch he belonged to is weaker by a hand. Though Lanyon had been in my watch I had never noticed anything particular in him; he was a fair average seaman and no more; but I believe he was popular in the fore-castle as being a good-tempered man, always ready to oblige a shipmate with a friendly draw of his pipe, or a loan of any of the old rags of breeches and shirts which make up poor mercantile Jack's wardrobe; and

his death had impressed the men, though the moment he was overboard he would be forgotten.

At nine o'clock the boatswain tuned up his pipe, the captain came down on the quarter-deck, the chief mate remained on the poop to look after the ship, none of the passengers were present, so Lanyon's funeral was altogether among sailors. They had laid the body, sewn up in canvas—for he had had no hammock—on one of the forehatch gratings, and covered it over with the big ensign; four of the dead man's watchmates brought him along, and the rest of the ship's company came after; the upper part of the lee gangway was unshipped and the foot of the grating set upon it, and a couple of hands stood by to haul of the ensign and tip up the body into the sea when the signal was given. All hands stood bare-headed, and the scene was a solemn one. I felt the pathos of the many rough human countenances gathered around, some looking down, some with their eyes fixed on the grating, some with a sort of wonder on them such as children's faces wear when anything unusual is going forward. Joe, the negro seaman, stood with a mournful grin upon his flat, honest black face, and the Southrons hung grim and sulky in the rear; they were Catholics, and did not like being brought into this ceremony.

My attention, however, was speedily diverted from the crew to the skipper. He seemed extraordinarily agitated, and instead of a Prayer-book held a roll of paper, that trembled in his grasp as he ran his eyes over the men. It is always customary aboard English ships to bury the dead at sea with the office as given in the Church Service, but I saw that Captain Flanders was going to have a service of his own, and I ex-

changed glances with little Thomas, who stood at the poop-rail without his hat, looking down, with his eyebrows rounded like the new moon. All the men were silent; nothing could be heard but the wobbling wash of the water alongside, and the creak and strain up aloft as the vessel rolled. The sun shone bright, and the sails soared into a heaven that was fast growing a cloudless blue from horizon to horizon.

"Men," exclaimed the captain in his deep bass, which his excitement made as vibratory as a harp-string, "I am aware that when a man dies at sea it is customary to bury him according to the rites of the religion in which the captain and crew believe. But I do not believe in the Church of England. I am a primitive Christian. I believe, and all you who hear me should likewise believe, that prayer is only acceptable when offered in the edifice constructed by the Almighty, whose roof," he cried, pointing upwards with a wild, dramatic gesture, "is yonder blue, and whose floor is the green of the fields and the billows of the ocean. I say, men, that the primitive Christian, whose cathedral is the universal world, wants neither archbishop, bishop, priest, monk, curate, nor clerk to pray with him or for him!" By this time his excitement was so great, that his eyes glowed in his head like a cat's in the dark; he dashed his arm about, striking the paper in his hand such repeated blows, that I conceived he would presently demolish it. I saw the men staring round at one another, evidently a great deal puzzled to know what all this meant, though I believe most of them thought it was all ship-shape, and a regular part of the usual ceremony.

"Instead, therefore," he continued, almost shouting,

"of reading a service opposed to the examples of those forefathers of yours and mine, men, whose memory is more refreshing to the Christian heart than is the fountain of the desert to the tongue of the parched Arab, I intend," he cried, flourishing his manuscript, "to read you an essay upon spirits, in which I shall invite you not to mourn for our dead shipmate, but to know and feel with me that even as we stand here looking upon the flag that covers his clay, his spirit—himself, indeed!—not an object that we can touch, but an object we may, by prayer, hear and behold, is among us—there, or there, or there—ay, or there! for *there* he stands, erect among you, visible to me. My God! how visible!"

With his long forefinger projected, his head thrown back, his eyes glowing, the sun reflected in the tight polished skin of his long, narrow forehead, he pointed plump at the negro.

Joe, who had been listening to this extraordinary harangue, with his head gradually falling back and his mouth slowly opening wider and wider, terrified by the concluding shout of the skipper, and by all hands turning to look at him, and either believing that he himself had become a spirit, or that Lanyon's ghost was just behind, uttered a peculiar yell, and jumped with all his strength sideways, and striking a lightly built Dane of the name of Andersen full in the stomach, tumbled him clean over, and they both rolled away to the foot of the mainmast. This accident, which under any other circumstance would have produced a general laugh, and probably some horse-play, merely served to increase the alarm of the sailors, who had been rendered nervous enough already by the manner in which

the captain had pointed indiscriminately among them, and they began to huddle together, occasionally glancing over their shoulders whilst they watched the face of the skipper, whose fluency had not been checked an instant by the capsizal of the negro.

He was now growing incoherent, talking the wildest stuff, and flinging about like a Shaker. The more incomprehensible he grew, the more emphatic he became, and I was beginning to wonder how long he was going to keep us listening to his nonsense, when he pulled open the manuscript, and elevating his hand, began to read.

The lecture lasted half an hour. I should be sorry to give even what my memory preserves of it. It was crammed full of quotations from all sorts of writers, and it was all about ghosts and spirits, and what they had said and how they had appeared, and the use of them as tests of primitive Christianity. Long before it was over the men had grown impatient, and were shuffling about with their feet as if they were listening to a long sermon in church. It was plain that not one of them understood a word of it, any more than the captain himself did, in my opinion. Before a third of it had been read, little Thomas, with a face of disgust, slued on his heel and walked away aft, and I saw the captain lift his eyes and notice the mate's action.

At last he came to an end, pocketed the manuscript, and exclaimed, in a deep voice, "Let him depart in peace." This was his signal for tilting the grating, but the men who held it did not understand him, and looked at me, and I had to make a sign; on this they hove up the end of the grating, whilst one of

them snatched off the ensign, and the body fell. The captain went into the cuddy.

"That'll do, men," said I. "Carry that grating forward, roll up the ensign, and stow it away in the flag-locker."

And so terminated poor Lanyon's funeral.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "JESSIE JACKSON."

I WAS not much surprised that the men took but little notice of Captain Flanders' method of conducting a funeral service. It was a thing that had nothing to do with the ship's discipline; they would hardly guess that he was not in his right mind until he had acted like a madman in matters whose ordering they understood. Had he called all hands to close-reef the topsails with a pleasant breeze astern, or attempted to heave the ship to in a gale of wind under a flying jib, the men would have believed him mad; but when it came to things out of their reckoning like a funeral service, they could not swear that he was not orthodox in all he did, and as all the education aboard was aft, they were bound to think that what came from aft was right. The truth is, merchant sailors are the most ignorant body of men in the world. I say this with reluctance and shame, but it is my experience. They are mending a little, though a very little now, I believe, but a few years ago there was scarcely a ship's company afloat of whom more than two or three could read. Jack is used as a slave, is utterly neglected, badly fed, clothed, and lodged, and leads and lives the life of an animal. There is not a nation of savages

known to this country but has more money expended on its souls and brains than sailors.

The boatswain of the *Waldershare* was an intelligent seaman, far above the average, yet, finding me forward of the galley that afternoon watching some job, the nature of which I forget, he came up to me and said, "I beg pardon, sir, but me and Chips have been having an argument over Lanyon's funeral, and perhaps you'll settle it. Chips he says that there isn't but one sarvice, and that's wrote down, and all that you've got to do when you bury a man is to read it out. He says that sarvice wasn't the one the skipper read: what it was that he read, Chips he says he don't know; but he argues it wasn't regular. Now, what I says is this," said he, laying a big, hairy fist in the hollow of a palm as hard and shiny as the sole of an old boot, "that there isn't no regular sarvice at all. When a shipmate dies, you may read a prayer over him or deliver a speech. I say it's just a matter of fancy. I was in a Liverpool brig, bound to Halifax, Nova Scotia, when two men died in a week. All that the skipper said when the first body was brought to the gangway was this: 'Men,' he says, 'Jim's cable has parted, and he's gone. There lies his body, but where the rest of him is, mates,' he says, 'you must turn to and read the Bible to find out.' This was all he said. Two days afterwards, t'other man dies, and *his* body was brought aft, and all that the skipper says was, 'Men, this here corpus was Tom Long's. You remember what I told you about Jim? well, I says the same thing of Tom.' Chips says that was all wrong; but what I says is, there isn't no regular sarvice, but that you can say just what you please over a dead

shipmate, perwiding, of course, you're respectful, and don't use no bad language."

I gave him my notion of the matter, but at the same time put it in such a way as to make him believe it was merely a question for a man's own judgment, and that the skipper had done what no doubt he believed to be the correct thing. Indeed, I was extremely anxious to keep all suspicion of the captain's sanity out of the forecastle. If once the men should take it into their heads to believe him mad, there was no foretelling the trouble that might come upon the ship.

We had now fine weather again; the afternoon was cloudless, with a soft cool wind blowing from the east. When I looked around upon the blue sea, with its surface like shot silk, and at the stately heights of white canvas silently doing their work, and held as steady by the breeze as though they had been carved out of marble, and listened to the hum of the froth at the stem, falling upon the ear like the note of a song, I found it difficult to realize the furious gale of the preceding night, the screaming of the hurricane, the main-deck full of water, the horrible straining and groaning of the tossed and driven ship. There was still a long swell following us astern, but it was perceptible only so far as it gave a new kind of grace to the motion of the ship, heaving her forward with stately sweeps, then leaving her to sink with a bow, as though she paused in her running to drop a curtsy out of very wantonness.

I had had a long chat with Nelly, who remained on deck when the other passengers and the captain went below to lunch, and told her all about the gale,

and the death of Lanyon, and the captain's curious notion of a burial service. Then we talked of Burmarsh and the Johnsons, how much she would have to tell Phœbe when she got home again, and we planned what she should do when we arrived at Callao. She was for remaining on board the ship, but I considered that it would be best for her to board with some English family, if such could be found, whilst the ship remained in port; she would have more privileges in that way, and companions to show her about the place. However, we did not dwell much upon this, for Callao was a long way off yet, and we had a good nine or ten weeks to settle our plans in. Indeed, to speak the truth, I had as good as made up my mind to marry her at Callao; she had gone out with me as a sweetheart, but she should return my wife, and no one aboard need know anything about it, unless it were Mr. Thomas, whom I could trust. But, as I have said, these were early times, and I did not so much as breathe my idea to her.

I had left her to go aft to look at the compass, when I was hailed by a man in the mizzen-topmast cross-trees, who was at work on some chafing gear up there.

"Hillo!" I answered.

"There's something black right away out to leeward yonder," he cried; "about four points on the port bow."

"What does it look like?"

"Why, it's only a speck, sir, and I can't say; and there's no telling how far off it is."

"Hold on!" I called; "I'll bring the glass aloft."

I jumped into the mizzen-rigging and gained the top.

"Aloft there!" said I, looking up at the man who was overhead; "where away is your speck?"

He pointed with his finger, and looking in that direction, I clearly perceived a small black spot, apparently close under the horizon, that vanished and reappeared as the swell rose and sank between us and it. I had great difficulty in fixing it with the glass, but all on a sudden it leapt into the circle of the lens, and before it could vanish again behind the tall blue swell, I very plainly saw that it was a ship's boat, painted black, and without a mast. I kept the glass steadied to the point at which I had directed it, and in a few moments the boat again appeared. She was a long distance off, and the man who had first seen her must have had a very powerful sight.

"It's a ship's boat," I called out to him, "but I don't see anybody in her."

I had another long look, and as the boat rose high on the swell, which threw the outline of her gunwale sharp against the keen blue sky, I fancied I could discern a black dot in her stern-sheets.

I gained the deck, and putting my head into the skylight, called to the skipper, who sat at lunch.

"There's a ship's boat in sight, sir, and I believe there's a man in her, but I won't be sure."

"How does she bear?"

"Broad on the port bow, sir."

He left the table and came on deck, and called to me to hand him the glass; but I told him she was not visible from the deck.

"Let her go off a couple of points," he exclaimed, motioning to the man at the wheel, "and ease off the lee main-braces."

We held on in this way for about twenty minutes, during which time I stood on the hencoop keeping a bright look-out for the object, which the shift of helm should bring well forward of the port bow. Being nearly dead before the wind, that was but a light breeze, our progress was slow. Suddenly a hand on the forecastle called out, "There's a boat ahead of us, sir!—there she is!" and at the same moment she rose clear to my eye on the summit of the swell. The captain levelled the glass, and took a long squint. She rose and vanished several times whilst he looked.

"I see a man in her holding up an oar with something white fluttering at the end of it—see what you can make out," said he, handing me the glass.

The boat swung steadily into the field the moment my eye was at the glass, and I saw not one, but two human figures in the boat; one forward in the bow, and the other amidships, holding erect an oar (as I believed), to which was attached a pocket-handkerchief.

The sighting of an open boat at sea with people in her is an extremely unusual occurrence. The news spread through the ship like wildfire, and the cook came running out of the galley, the steward out of the cuddy, and the watch below out of the forecastle, to view an object that no sailor can behold without a thrill. Even an empty boat at sea, rolling here and there bottom up, is a touching thing in the eye of a sailor, as it almost invariably indicates a disaster. He knows that she was once part of a ship, and may be the only fragment left of her; and when you see her bottom up, with the green water pouring along her keel, and the sunshine flashing upon her wet planking

as she emerges for a moment, to be overwhelmed again a few seconds after, you cannot help imagining that shipwrecked people must have been in her once, and then you think of the terrible hours of suspense, the dark nights coming down, the hunger and thirst, the bitter, protracted anguish that was ended you know not when, nor after how long a time, though yonder lies all that remains of the story, and it is already growing green and brown under the restless sea and the un pitying sun. But the interest grows deep beyond expression when the boat that a ship encounters lives, and human beings are seen in her. You seem at such a time to draw a long breath, for you cannot guess what sight of horror has been reserved for your eyes, and what tales of suffering you may have to listen to.

I noticed that the nearer we drew to the boat the more restless and disturbed in his manner Captain Flanders became. He had so far exhibited the same behaviour on every occasion that had made a call upon his feelings—when the French ship went ashore on the Goodwins, when the cook had run into the cuddy pursued by the men, when Lanyon was struck dead at the wheel, etc. He bade me give him the glass, but his hand trembled so much he could not use it, and returned it to me, telling me, with a tremor in his voice, to see if there were more than two men in the boat, and particularly if there were any women.

I again had a good look, for by this time the boat was not more than a mile distant, and her shape lay quite plain on the water, though the swell was continually hiding her; however, I could not make out more than two men, one of whom was now standing

up in the bow, throwing his arms up and down, whilst the other sat flourishing the oar.

"He has dropped his oar now, sir!" I exclaimed. "Ah, I see! he has thrown it over the stern and is trying to scull the boat. That must mean they have only one oar aboard."

"Get the courses hauled up," said the captain, "and see that a hand is stationed with a line ready to heave it in the boat as we bring her alongside."

I ran forward to get these orders executed.

"Lower away your royal and top-gallant yards and slacken off your jib-sheets," sung out the skipper, in a voice the unmistakable excitement of which made all hands stare aft at him. This was done, and the *Waldershare*, losing much of her way, floated languidly towards the boat, that was now within hailing distance.

"Look out for a line!" I shouted from the fore-castle, and the man who stood in the bow waved his hand with a gesture that made me see at once he was a sailor.

"They seem none the worse for being adrift," exclaimed the boatswain, who stood near me. "Blowed if they could take easier if they was crossing from Gravesend to Tilbury."

"Steady!" I shouted. "Port your helm a little."

The wheel was put over.

"Stand by!" cried the man who held the line, and the coil fell cleverly into the boat, that in a minute sheered alongside and lay wobbling under the port gangway. There was a rush to the quarter-deck to see the men come aboard; all discipline was forgotten in such a moment as this. The gangway was un-

shipped, and some steps thrown over the side, and the two men came on deck.

The first man was the one who had stood in the bow waving his arms. He was a tall, thin, long-faced man, with a yellow skin and a bunch of black hair under his chin; dressed in a blue alpaca coat and blue serge trousers, and a soft felt white hat with a very broad brim. From the very crown of his hat to the square toes of his long boots he was a Yankee, and when his feet touched the deck, he took a cool, steady stare around him just as he might have done had he merely boarded us from his own ship to make inquiries.

His companion was a short, thick, square-built man, with long, immensely round arms, at the end of each of which hung a fist fit for a giant nine feet high. He was a half-caste, as well as I could make out, though his natural brown had been considerably deepened by the sun; he had small, fierce black eyes, the African nose with the European mouth, and he wore a short, bristly moustache, that served to heighten the white of a row of long sharp teeth that glistened between his red lips. His jaws and neck were those of a bull-dog. His dress consisted of a pair of flowing duck trousers and a striped cotton shirt, and around his waist was a broad leather belt with toggles for the reception of a knife or a pistol, or any other weapon he might deem it necessary to carry about with him in the exercise of his vocation. He looked as complete a ruffian as ever went clothed in human attire, and as he bounded over the ship's side he gazed around him with a scowl.

"May I ask if the cap'n of this vessel is here-

abouts?" exclaimed the first man; with a strong nasal accent and speaking with a drawl. He had been looking around for some one resembling a shipmaster, and small wonder that he had not discovered Captain Flanders to be his man.

"I command this ship," answered the skipper, "and I am glad to have been the means of preserving you. Step aft into the cuddy, where your wants shall be attended to at once."

"Cap'n, let me shake your hand." The Yankee gripped the skipper's fingers. "I've no smartness at speech-making, but you've saved me and my mate here from a tarnation ugly death, and though neither him nor me has tasted a blessed drop of drink nor a mossul of food since supper-time last night, I'd choke sooner than swallow a mouthful aboard this ship before I had thanked you for my life." These were his very words as I remember them, and he then wrung the captain's hand violently and brushed his eyes over with the back of his long yellow claws. The half-caste muttered some words of thanks, but what he said I did not hear.

They were both following the captain into the cuddy, when the Yankee stopped.

"What about that 'ere boat?" he exclaimed. "Is she worth slinging aboard? She was my port quarter-boat, and cost nigh about one hundred dollars." The captain shook his head. "Wal, then, let her go," said the Yankee, and they all three entered the cuddy.

I overheard the crew, who hung about the quarter-deck, discussing these unexpected visitors.

"Bill, the black 'un's a rascal. No sogerin' with him, mate."

"Ay, a down-east knuckle-duster. He'd have his teeth in your throat if you didn't hear his first orders!"

"He wants towing astern for a few days. He'd be the better for a little cleanin', mates."

"His face beats my time! A shark must ha' been *his* mother."

"One of you jump into the boat and cast her adrift," I called out. "Hands aft to the braces. Man the top-gallant halliards."

It was like a dream to see the boat, that was just now ahead with men in her, drop astern empty. She seemed almost human in my eyes, as she rose and fell in our long silvery wake, and I watched her as I walked along the poop, until she vanished out of sight. It is the immensity of the ocean that gives the waifs one meets upon it their pathetic interest. The scene is so spacious, and the loneliness so great, that one cannot behold even a broken spar floating leagues out at sea without a kind of compassion, as though it could not but feel its desolateness.

Presently the captain came up the companion on to the poop, followed by the two rescued men. The Yankee had slung the ship's glass over his shoulder, and around the neck of the other was suspended a powerful binocular glass, belonging to Captain Flanders. They both looked the better for the food and drink they had taken, and as they all three came forward the Yankee squinted round him with lively curiosity, staring hard at Nelly, and contriving an ungainly and ludicrously convulsed bow as he passed her.

"Now, Obed," said he, "you take the fore-royal, and I'll perch myself on the main. I guess the 'rizon's

as clear as glass, and if there's anything visible, you'll oblige me by lettin' me hear what quality of voice the Creator has blessed you with."

As he said this he clawed hold of the main-rigging, and floundered up the ratlines, the joints of his long bony shanks sticking out against his trousers like knuckles, and his feet protruding through the rigging like outriggers slewed inboard. Meanwhile Obed, as the Yankee called him, always preserving his villainous scowl, and seeming to have no eyes for what was about him, went with a walk like a fisherman's trot along the main-deck, slung himself with one hand into the fore-rigging, and jogged aloft with a regular beat of the feet and patting of the hands, as though he kept time to a tune. The men who were at work about the deck followed him and the Yankee with their eyes, considerably puzzled that the first thing a couple of mariners newly rescued from the very jaws of death should do was to masthead themselves.

On reaching the main-royal yard the Yankee jammed himself between the backstay and the mast, and in that posture slowly swept the horizon with his glass. Obed, on the other hand, anxious to astonish the weak nerves of the Britishers, stood on the fore-royal yard, and crossing his right leg over his left, whilst he leant with his elbow on the truck—for our short royal-mast heads barely showed three feet above the yards when hoisted—applied the binoculars to his eyes, and surveyed the horizon from that immense height with all the ease of a young gentleman in a theatre-stall studying a beauty in a distant box.

Whilst the two men went aloft, Captain Flanders stood alongside of me watching them, and suddenly

exclaimed, "I hope they'll see her! I hope they'll see her! I have promised him all the assistance I can render. The demons! Never did I hear of such inhuman conduct!" His voice betrayed great agitation, and he appeared to talk to himself more than to me.

Presently, fixing his eyes on my face, he exclaimed, "Those two men, Mr. Lee, are the master and first mate of an American barque, called the *Jessie Jackson*. The men mutinied, and sent them adrift this morning in the midst of a heavy sea—you remember what the sea was at eight o'clock, sir?—with only one oar, and without a drop of water or an ounce of bread. My blood boils to think of such fiendish cruelty. They have run away with the vessel, and Captain Taber—that's he aloft on the main-royal yard there—believes that it is their intention to put her ashore somewhere to the east'ards of the Amazon, as the vessel is bound to Pernambuco, and they can find an excuse for being in that neighbourhood."

"I suppose the captain has gone aloft to try to see if he can make her out anywhere, sir?"

"Yes, and if we overhaul her, I have promised to chase her, if she don't lead me too far out of my course."

This was as much as he condescended to tell me, or rather, I think he was too much agitated to sustain a conversation. He walked as far as the port quarter-boat, and, without addressing the ladies, stood looking aloft, occasionally muttering to himself and slightly motioning with his right hand. At the mastheads the Yankee and his mate occasionally exchanged a call, but what they said I could not hear, owing to the

flapping of the mainsail, for the wind had fallen very light, and every roll of the ship sent the heavy courses beating against the masts and rigging.

Presently Captain Taber came down, leaving Obed aloft. The half-caste had now seated himself on the yard, and his legs hung before the sail, whilst he occasionally lifted the glasses to his eyes. The Yankee joined Captain Flanders, and they had a long talk. I confess I found nothing odd in our skipper promising to chase the pirates—running away with a ship, the reader must know, is an act of piracy—providing they did not haul him out of his own course; it was not more than one captain would do to help another, and unless the barque carried guns, and her men were well armed, there was little doubt that our ship was strong-handed enough to carry her easily, could we lay her aboard. But it was not very clear to me what would be done if we succeeded in capturing her. As to the cause of the mutiny, I did not need to hear much of that after looking at the half-caste chief mate. Ruffianly officers always do make ruffianly crews, and if Obed was not the greatest ruffian that ever walked a deck, I was willing to own that I was blind of both eyes.

Anyhow, the barque was not in sight. It was now hard upon four o'clock; the two men had been sent adrift at eight; we had no doubt sighted them pretty nearly in the spot where they had been sent adrift, and consequently the *Jessie Jackson* had eight hours' start of us. I thought this was heavy odds against our overhauling her, for if she only shifted her course a couple of points, she would be out of sight behind the horizon when we were abeam of her, and

we should pass without seeing her; that is, if we sailed better than she, which was yet to be proved. I thought it probable that she was the barque we had sighted to windward on the previous evening, when the sunset lay heavy upon the horizon, and which the hand aloft at the time had described as a glob of blood. If so, then she must have run further to the southwards by eight hours than we.

How the news got about, I don't know; but it was soon spread fore and aft that the men we had rescued were the captain and mate of an American vessel, the crew of which had mutinied and run off with the ship, after sending the skipper and first officer adrift, and that the *Waldershare* was to chase them. All through the dog-watches the hands talked together in groups forward, peering over both bows and under the jibs, and some going aloft to see if anything like a sail was visible ahead. Such a chase as Captain Flanders meditated was altogether a novelty in the lives of these merchant sailors, and filled them, as indeed it filled me, with interest and excitement. But nothing in all this adventure struck me as more curious than the perfect coolness with which the American captain accommodated himself to the situation in which he found himself placed. Rescued but a short time ago from a fate of which, as a sailor, he would perfectly appreciate the lingering horror and suffering, he now paced the poop of the *Waldershare* with as much self-possession and nonchalance as he could have shown had he been put aboard to take a new command.

All this time Obed remained aloft, as mute and wooden as a figure-head.

I was talking to Mr. Thomas about the chances of the chase, and he was condemning Captain Flanders' resolution in very unmeasured terms, saying that it was a captain's duty to sail his ship to her destination with all practicable speed, and that it would be a bad look-out for ship-owners and traders if masters of vessels were at liberty to go out of their way and delay their voyage to hunt after adventures of this kind, when the Yankee came over to us, Captain Flanders having left the deck.

"I presume, gentlemen," says he, thumbing the fore part of his broad-brimmed hat as though he would lift it, "that I am speaking to the mates of this here ship?"

Mr. Thomas replied that that was so.

"I beg, then," said he, "you'll excuse the liberty if I ask one of you for a chew of tobacco. I find your cap'n doesn't smoke, and when my men cut me adrift they forgot to favour me with anything that I could get a draw or a spit out of."

I had a piece of a stick of tobacco in my pocket, which I gave him. He bit out a mouthful, and said that with my leave he would put the rest in his pocket.

"Are you the chief officer?" he inquired of Mr. Thomas.

"I am."

"The cap'n tells me you have sailed in this ship before. I reckon you've got a clipper here, sir. I was admiring her run as she bore down to us. Baltimore never turned out a superior article. I never saw finer lines, though we've built some nautical expresses in

the States too, sir, even in my time. What's her best pace, do you guess?"

"With the wind right abeam and all three royals on her, the log has given sixteen: but then she was homeward bound, had worked herself easy, and was not down to the chain-plate bolts with iron and steel."

"How much have you got out of her this voyage?"

"At the very best, twelve—that was with a smooth sea."

"That'll serve!" exclaimed the Yankee, going to the side to squirt the tobacco juice out of his mouth: "the *Jessie* can't beat that, or, if she can, I calculate the wind that'll drive her twelve 'll drive you thirteen."

"That's very likely," said I.

"I want to overhaul that vessel badly," he continued, in his strong nasal accent, and speaking with a tiresome drawl, that seemed a tremendous piece of affectation alongside the active fire in his eyes. "Every blessed dollar I own in the world is in her. Half of her belongs to me, and if those creatures put her ashore, which I reckon is their lay, they'll strand me too, gentlemen, and that's a fact."

"Have you any notion what course they mean to steer?" asked Mr. Thomas.

"Wal, if Obed's ears are good for a caution, I calculate they mean to sail straight on. He heard enough to guess what they mean to be at; and if they don't change their minds, they'll try for the south'ard of the Guy-hana coast, somewhere betwixts the mouth of the Amazon River and Roque Cape. The second mate heads the mutiny, and he has a pretty considerable

acquaintance with that coast, havin' been raised in Cayenne" (he pronounced it *Cayin*). "Wal, as I reckon, gentlemen, they'll make your course until they catch the trades, and if that be so," he exclaimed, with a sudden slap of his thigh, "we'll have 'em yet!"

I asked what was the cause of the mutiny.

He vouchsafed no further information than by saying that it lay among four men, and that the ringleader was the second mate. The crew consisted of ten hands. Three of the men were well-disposed, and the mutineers, knowing this, had closed the forescuttle before going aft; they then overpowered the mate, made his feet fast, and stowed him away in one of the quarter-boats. The skipper, hearing Obed's shouts, rushed on deck, where he was immediately knocked down and sat upon by a couple of the men, whilst the others lowered away the boat, unhooked the falls, and brought her alongside; they then dragged the skipper to the gangway, waited until a sea lifted the boat, and then dropped him into it, after which they let her go adrift, put the helm over, filled and stood on, leaving the boat tossing in a heavy sea. The two men thus abandoned had only one oar, which they lashed to the end of the painter and hove overboard, and this kept the boat's head to the sea, otherwise she would have capsized; as it was, they had to keep bailing for their lives with a soup-and-bouilli tin which they found in the stern-sheets; but the wind moderated fast and the sea went down with it, and all that remained for them to do was to keep a look-out for any passing ship.

The Yankee told his story without the least air of

excitement, and with a slow, long drawl. I asked if the men were armed? He answered that the only fire-arm aboard was his pistol, and added that if our ship could only overhaul his vessel, there would be no difficulty in regaining her, as the mutineers were in a minority, and half a dozen of the *Waldershare's* crew, headed by himself and Obed, would manage the business.

Having said this, and squirting another mouthful of tobacco juice overboard, he went forward and hailed his mate from the forecastle.

"Do you see anything up there?"

"Nothing."

"Come down, then."

"There's a murdering face for you!" said Mr. Thomas, indicating Obed, as the two men came aft, inquisitively followed by the eyes of the crew. "The very sight of him is enough to breed a mutiny. See how our men look at them and whisper! If he's not hanged soon there'll be some broken skulls going yet among the poor devils he may lord it over."

They entered the cuddy, into which they had been beckoned by the steward; and when the dinner was put upon the table, they both took their places (as I saw through the skylight, for my watch had come round again), Obed right opposite to Nelly, who eyed him with disgust and aversion, though I never once saw him lift his eyes or look around. Indeed, the man was out of his element there, and would have enjoyed his meal more in the forecastle, though I doubt if the crew would have suffered him to come among them. As to Captain Taber, his drawling notes sounded incessantly. As often as I looked down I saw him nod-

ding, with his glass to his lips, to one or the other of the persons around him. It was impossible not to feel respect for a man who could endure with festive complacency such trouble as had befallen our Yankee.

As the sun went down, the breeze dropped; and by the time that the darkness had closed round the ship, there was not a breath of air. The sea was full of stars, and it was like looking at the sky, so perfectly were the small yellow orbs reflected. I lingered half-way up the poop-ladder, with my elbows on the bulwark, to smoke a pipe before I turned in. Right aft, Captain Taber was talking to Madam Espinosa, and her foolish laugh was incessant; Mr. Black, Espinosa, and Nelly conversed near the skylight; the captain walked the deserted side of the poop alone; and near me stood Mr. Thomas and Obed, the latter answering the chief mate's questions in a thick voice, that appeared to proceed from his stomach.

It seemed hard not to be alone with my sweetheart on such a night; but she was near me, and I knew she was well, and I made this reflection satisfy me. The atmosphere was sultry, but as the ship rose and sank with the ebony swell (that filled the eye with the illusion of the stars sweeping through the sea as though the ocean were full of shooting fires), the sails flapped heavily, discharging at intervals a shower of dew, and filling the decks with circling draughts of sweet air. At times a meteor would sail through the dark sky, leaving a silvery trail as it went, and breaking and vanishing in a cloud of luminous dust. The phosphorescent blue fires swarmed, kindling and fading fitfully, among the stars reflected in the water; and the flapping of the sails against the masts, and the wash of the water

around the ship, and the metallic clank of the tiller-chains, with now and again the creaking of a block overhead or the straining of a timber, were sounds which mingled pleasantly with the voices and the laughter upon the deck.

It remained calm all through the first and middle watches. Nature appeared to have exhausted herself over the previous night's job; the very ocean swell had grown fainter, and the great Atlantic was fast becoming as breathless as an inland lake. A cabin had been offered to the American captain and his mate, but the only use they had made of it was to trim themselves up for dinner. They both slept on deck, and kept watch and watch. When I relieved Mr. Thomas at midnight, I found Captain Taber routing out Obed, who lay on a hen-coop over against the port quarter-boat with his head on a coil of rope. The Yankee took the mate's place, turning up his coat-collars and hoisting his knee-caps almost into his mouth, and appeared to fall asleep in a moment. About half a dozen times in the four hours I think Obed must have gone aloft as high, probably, as the fore-royal yard, though as we lay with square yards I could not follow him with my eye.

When he came down the first time I asked him what he hoped to see?

"Why, the *Jessie Jackson*," says he, speaking with a negro's voice.

"But we've made no progress worth mentioning since you've been aboard, and your ship can't be any nearer now than she was when we sighted your boat."

"I hope my goin' aloft ain't contrairy to the rules of this hooker?" says he.

"Not a bit," I answered. "You may stop aloft and take your meals aloft till the *Jessie Jackson* heaves in sight, if you please."

"I want to be the first man to sight her, and I should like to be the first man to board her," said he, with a little tremble in his thick speech, and the whites of his eyes gleaming as he rolled them about.

"You'd make the lee scuppers run red if you could, wouldn't you, my beauty?" I thought, as I left him and stood for some time alongside the man at the wheel.

The fellow excited in me more aversion than I knew how to control. I felt a sort of debasement in talking to him, and when he presently pulled out a tobacco-pipe that the steward had procured for him, and lighted it, he looked like the very devil himself, as the flame of the match illuminated his dark face and glittered in his gleaming eyes, and exposed the monkeyfied protrusion of his lips as he wrapped them round the pipe stem. However, he had not yet done with me, for presently he came to where I stood, and peered over the stern to look about him for a catspaw. He sucked his pipe hard, and the muscular power of his chest was curiously expressed in the sound of his vigorous breathing, that exactly resembled a whale blowing in the distance.

"I reckon that yaller cuss, Nathan, guesses we're at the bottom of the sea by this time," said he, with a grin that laid bare his teeth. "There are three casks of rum in the mainhold, slap under the hatches, and they'll have broached one when they cut us adrift, and I calculate there's been no want of singin' aboard the *Jessie* this day. They've cussed me and the old man

up to the eyes over and over agin;—you see; and Nathan has jumped on to the cap'n's chair and given out my name, an' if I had been thar listenin' I couldn't know better what he said than I dew here. Every man'll have had a pannikin full o' black rum, an' I know the words they gave me as they drunk it down!"

Beyond the tremble in his voice there was no rage expressed in it; but when he had done speaking, he bit the shank of his pipe off, and the bowl fell to the deck. He did not appear to notice this for some moments, and then suddenly spat the shank from his mouth, picked up the bowl and slung it overboard with a sweep of his arm that made the air whistle, and sprang forward; and under the foot of the mainsail I could see his dark body dancing up the lower fore-rigging, his furious gestures shaking the shrouds as heavily as if half a dozen men were climbing them.

About half an hour before I went below a little breeze sprang up from the north-west. Before I had time to sing out to the watch to trim the yards, Captain Taber tumbled off the hencoop and came sprawling up to me like a disjointed scarecrow on the top of his long toes.

"Now you have it!" he cried, rubbing his hands together until his knuckles cracked under the friction. And he danced aft and stood whistling over the stern as though he were calling a dog; and when the hands came aft to man the main-braces, he tallied on with them, shouting, "Hurrah! here's the Britisher as'll froth this puddle! Handsomely over the bricks, my bully boys! Blow up, blow up! Hurrah! Here's the A 1 copper bottom as'll lay plump little *Jessie* aboard! Now then

you nigger, up aloft with yer," he shouted to Obed; "and if ye catch sight of anything on the 'rizon, though it be but a grit o' dirt, screech out, you monkey, as though the devil was flying away with you! Hurrah! the *Jessie* has our tow-rope, and stand by, bullies, to haul in the slack!"

I was as much amused as the men by the fellow's excitement. He hung about for some time looking over the ship's side and up aloft, and peering into the binnacle, and then betook himself to the hencoop again, adjusting his knees to his throat precisely as before, and falling asleep instantly.

By the time the watch were relieved, the ship was carrying three studding-sails and the breeze freshening. I hove the log and found her doing seven knots. Hearing the log-reel rattle, the Yankee came aft, and when I gave him the speed he burst into a loud laugh, as harsh and metallic as the rasping of a hand-saw. He watched the ship's wake, gloating and chuckling, with his mouth full of tobacco, and was evidently surprised at the speed of the ship under a breeze that was almost astern and still light enough for so deep a vessel.

The wind held steady for several hours, and then veered to the westward and came on to blow fresh in strong puffs. It had hit the *Waldershare's* best sailing point, and at nine o'clock the ship was lying down with her lee scuppers all bubbling, under a tremendous show of canvas; for Captain Flanders, infected by the Yankee's excitement, had set the main-topmast studding-sail, which was more than he would have done under ordinary circumstances, and the vessel was roaring through the sea as she had only once done before,

and that was when the gale had struck her, peeling the water on her weather bow into a high green transparent wave that curled and broke into foam before it was abreast of the gangway, and fled aft, mingling with the boiling water that swept astern to leeward, and making a wake as yellow as cream, that danced and broadened down into the quivering horizon.

I never remember a more splendid sight than the ship offered me from the forecandle, whither I went to give some orders to the boatswain. Right forward away as far as the flying jibboom end is the proper place to look at a ship under canvas, for there she seems a separate thing; from that point of view you have the whole of her in your eye, and can behold the beautiful sight of her bows ripping up and tearing the water, leaping so as sometimes to expose her forefoot, with the metal sheathing laid bare, and shining brightly as the long lines of foam rush down it, then burying her nose with a huge *souse* until only her figure-head shows over the vast surge which she sends boiling and hissing right under where you are seated, while her decks slope down to you in a steep run, and the quarter-boat hanging far aft seems suspended over your head. Even where I stood in the eyes of her, though I could not see her bows, I could command the whole of the square canvas, and mark the superb run of her lee bulwark against the white foam flying past, and her iron-black shrouds and backstays contrasted with the vast spaces of swollen polished canvas, with the studding-sails throwing their shadows clean and dark upon the topsails, and the blue sky dancing between the tops and cross-trees and under the foot of the sails, and the water leaping in sparkling green

seas as high as her weather bulwarks, then falling back with a hollow hissing splash, like serpents exhausted with their vain endeavours to leap inboard.

"The *Jessie Jackson* must be a clipper with a vengeance if she can beat this!" thought I, the bright triumphant show making the blood leap in my veins. If she were ahead we were bound to overhaul her, and I gazed aloft at the figure of Obed, diminished to dwarfish proportions by the great height he occupied, and longed for the cry of "Sail ho!" for already the excitement of the chase—though, to be sure, until we rose the barque we could not pretend to call it a chase—was strong upon me, and, as I believe, on all hands. Every Englishman belonging to the *Waldershare* was eager to sight the vessel, if only to let the Yankees see what a British merchantman could do in the way of sailing.

However, three long hours went by and nothing hove in sight. In all this time Obed only came down once, and then merely for a few minutes, whilst Captain Taber was up in the mizzen-top every quarter of an hour, working away with the glass to windward and to leeward, and floundering up and down the rigging with such a wild air of excitement that all hands were on the broad grin watching him. He had still his long drawl and nasal accent, but the coolness that had characterized his behaviour on the preceding night was gone, and his impatience was so great, that when he was not up aloft he was running to and fro the rail at the break of the poop, as you may have seen a newly caught bird travelling along the perch from side to side of his cage, stopping a moment when he got to windward to shade his eyes and peer at the

weather horizon, then flopping down to leeward and pausing again to bend his head and squint under the mainsail at the lee horizon; while now and then he would run aft and jump on to the weather poop-rail, clawing the vang with one hand, whilst he leaned his long body sheer over the water in order to see ahead, in which attitude he would utter a variety of exclamations, addressed to the ship at the top of his voice, such as "Go it, jade! hurrah, bully! spank along, spank along! grease your old heels and dance me a Yankee reel, for once! well done, old ——! drive into it, sweetheart!" whilst he kept slapping his thigh with his hand as if to encourage the ship by the sound, and finally would spring on to the deck again, making his long legs fly out, and more than once coming plump on his nose.

At about eleven o'clock, however, it breezed up so smartly, that Captain Flanders sung out to me to haul down the main-topmast studding-sail. Indeed, he had held on much longer than I should have thought he would venture to do; for the foam was so close to leeward that a man might almost have touched it by dropping his arm over the bulwark, whilst to windward the ship looked as if her hull were out of water, and as if nothing prevented you from seeing her keel but the bends of her; the forecastle was in a smother of foam, and the thunder of the seas under her bows was audible right aft. In truth, the *Waldershare* was never before so driven; all astern of her the water flashed up as if a gale of wind had just passed; and when she met a sea she seemed to jump clean over it, while the wind poured out of her courses like the voice of a hurricane, and the sweat ran down the faces of

the two men who steered her as if a can of oil had been capsized over their heads.

And yet, after the captain had given the order to get in the studding-sail, the Yankee skipper remonstrated with him with a most beseeching air. However, it would not do; Captain Flanders was not yet mad enough to lose his spars in order to please a man who wanted to overhaul a runaway ship, and before noon we had all the studding-sails in, and the fore and mizzen royals flying, with hands aloft; and even then the ship was carrying a couple of top-gallant sails more than she could bear.

Just, however, as the hands were on the fore-royal clewlines and the sail was flapping, Obed, who had dropped on to the top-gallant yard, raised a shout. Captain Taber was right aft against the wheel at the time, but no sooner did the cry reach his ears, than he made a plunge and shot forwards and sprang on to the fore-rigging, where he nearly danced an ordinary seaman, who was going aloft to furl the royal, into the sea by the convulsive jerking of his legs.

The captain, Mr. Thomas, and myself were taking sights at the time, and we could not give any attention to Obed's shouts, but when we had made eight bells, I put down my sextant and went forward. I looked up; a couple of ordinary seamen were on the fore-royal yard stowing the sail, and just under them, on either side the mast, were the Yankee skipper and Obed, with their glasses levelled at a point on the port bow.

"Aloft there!" I shouted. "What do you see?"

"A sail!" roared Obed, without removing the

glasses from his eyes. "We're waiting to rise her to see her rig."

"Forecastle there!" hailed Captain Flanders. "Is there anything in sight?"

"Yes, sir, a sail," I answered.

"Where away?"

"On the port bow."

He held up his hand in token that he heard me, and then went below, followed by Mr. Thomas, each man to work out the sights in his own cabin, and I returned to the poop to wait until the chief mate came on deck again. In about a quarter of an hour Captain Taber came running aft, blowing like a grampus.

"By the 'tarnal!" he cried, "she's a barque. She's riz high enough to see that. She's under easy sail! O Lord! if it was only six hours earlier!"

I took the glass from him, but she was not yet visible from the deck.

"We mustn't be cock-sure that she's the *Jessie Jackson*, though," said I. "Barque-rigged vessels are common enough hereabouts."

"Wal, young man, we shall see," he answered. "Whar's the cap'n?"

"Below, working out the sights."

He instantly bolted down the companion. Shortly afterwards Mr. Thomas came on deck.

"Is the Yankee in sight yet?" he asked.

"No, sir, not from the deck; nor, as I have just told the skipper, does it follow that because there's a barque ahead it's his."

"Can they make out what canvas she's under?"

"Easy canvas."

"Main top-gallant sail, eh? Why, then, we're not

going to overhaul her in an hour, Mr. Lee, if she chooses to crack on. What does the Yankee mean to do if she turns out to be his ship?"

"Board her, I suppose, sir."

"But suppose they won't let him?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "He's below with Captain Flanders now: I suppose they'll arrange something."

"What did you make us doing just now when you hove the log?"

"Ten and a half."

"If she's under easy canvas," said he, "she must be a fast vessel; for if they can make out her rig from the fore top-gallant yard, something ought to be visible from deck by this time, if we're overhauling her at all."

I pointed the glass, but nothing was in sight. Mr. Espinosa now came up to me with his wife, and wanted me to tell him all about the American captain and his ship; but it was my watch below, and I was not exactly in the humour for a cross-examination by Mr. Espinosa, so I referred him to Mr. Thomas, and, after exchanging a few words with Nelly, I left the deck.

I had a mouthful to eat before I went to my cabin, and then I laid down and slept soundly for about two hours; when, awaking and glancing through the port-hole, past which the green water was sweeping at a speed that made me guess the breeze was still very fresh, I bethought me of the Yankee barque, and all the excitement of the chase coming into my mind, I bundled out of my bunk and went on deck, content to sacrifice the remainder of the rest I could have taken for the sake of an adventure, the like of which I had never before been shipmates with.

The moment I gained the deck I saw the whole of my watch on the forecastle staring ahead. The watch on deck were, of course, at work, but every man who could invent an excuse for being forward where he could command the sea was there, and the cause was not far to seek.

Broad on the port bow was a little clipper barque, between four and five miles distant, painted black, and looking like a toy, all her sails and her hull brilliantly defined in the clear air, and sailing like a witch. Captain Flanders, Captain Taber, Mr. Thomas, and Obed were all to leeward of the poop watching her with glasses, and it seems that she *was* the Yankee's barque, and that I had hit my time for coming on deck cleverly, for only three minutes before we had run up a signal for her to heave to—the flags were all streaming in bright colours at the peak—and it appeared that they had just discovered our meaning, for their two royals and fore top-gallant sails were flying loose, and they were setting the gaff-topsail; a good hint that they were short-handed, for, after loosing the sails, they only sheeted home one at a time. However, it was evident they had no intention of heaving to, and now that they suspected we knew what had happened aboard of her, they were evidently all anxiety to get away from us. One by one they hoisted the yards and made sail, until the little vessel was a complete cloud of canvas, and we, who had been overhauling her fast, now found that she held her station ahead, and was even beginning to widen the distance between us.

The Yankee's excitement had passed again, and he watched her as coolly as a man might who had no

interest in the chase. Obed kept his eyes fixed on her with a diabolical scowl. But Captain Flanders' agitation was singular to witness; his eyes glowed in their sockets; every muscle in his face worked; he was repeatedly pulling off his hat to wipe his forehead, and his legs and arms were all of a quiver. The Yankee skipper glanced at him often with real astonishment, and Mr. Thomas drew away and stationed himself on the weather side of the poop.

It was plain now that there was to be a race for it, although, supposing we had heels enough to range alongside, what could we do if she refused to heave to? We were not a man-of-war; we had no guns aboard; we could not bring her to with a shot. We could, indeed, keep dodging after her until we fell in with a Government vessel; but, then, they would see with half an eye that we were a merchantman, and not likely to do that; and, indeed, I was surprised, now she saw our signal to heave to flying, that she did not put her helm up and steer away on another course, for they would very easily suspect it would not answer our purpose to follow her. However, she kept a steady helm, not altering her course by so much as half a point, and she ran along the water like a bird, skimming over the waves with wonderful grace and speed.

Finding that she was slowly drawing away from us, Captain Flanders ordered the royals to be set. It still blew a moderate gale, and the sea had grown very lively; the log was hove, and it was found that the extra canvas had increased the speed of the *Waldershare* by about half a knot. This was not worth counting, and I heard the Yankee skipper tell Captain Flanders

that she could easily bear all her studding-sails, and that if he commanded her he would venture his spars for the sake of the run. On this Captain Flanders, whose excitement deepened as the time went on, sung out to Mr. Thomas to get the fore and main topmast studding-sails on her. With this extra canvas the *Waldershare* appeared to be more pressed than she had been before they were hauled down. Every plunge she gave made her tremble fore and aft; the seas flew in sheets over her weather bow, and the lee side of the main-deck was all afloat, for she was burying her scuppers and the water could not escape. Every moment I expected to see something go. The strain was terrific; the rigging yelled, and she peeled the water out of the sea just like the rind of an apple falls over your thumb under the action of a knife.

Once Captain Taber forgot his coolness, and, rushing to the side, yelled out, whilst he slapped his thighs, "She's got the scent! Smoke and hum, sweetheart! You have her, old bucket!"

Indeed, a general excitement was now kindled fore and aft; all the watch on deck had left their work and joined their mates on the fore-castle, and no one thought of calling them back to their duty; and already we were stealing up to the barque, from under whose counter streamed a wake the tail-end of which was almost abeam of us, when we saw her hoist away her main top-mast studding-sail.

"Damn' em!" yelled the Yankee skipper, running the joints of the telescope into one another with a blow of the hand that was like to snap them.

"Let me have that glass for a moment," said I, and I levelled the tube.

She looked a vessel of about three hundred tons, low in the water, and painted black, with a narrow white streak. She had long skysail poles, though the yards were not crossed, and these, with a very great hoist of topsail, made her rig appear lofty almost out of proportion with her size. A man stood at the wheel, sometimes looking up and sometimes around at us; but with the exception of another hand on the foreyard who was doing something to the studding-sail boom, I saw no sign of her crew. In the softening light of the gathering evening, with her shapely hull flashing black on the running green waters, and her canvas soaring above the water line and finding a background in the dark southerly sky, she looked like a piece of ivory carving; sometimes all below her topsails vanished behind a sea, and then she would emerge, hove high, so that her black hull and the cloud of canvas it supported would appear poised for an instant on a green transparent point of water that reared above the horizon, and leave upon the mind the impression that what it beheld was an exquisite bit of miniature painting.

We had undoubtedly been overhauling her, though not very fast, either, before she set her studding-sails; but though this extra canvas almost laid her on her beam ends, and so much of her copper was out of water that the western sun flashing on it made her look as though the whole of her hull were of bright yellow metal, it enabled her to keep her distance from us, and in the intervals between some of the puffs she drew slightly ahead.

"Gentlemen all!" shouted the Yankee skipper, "look at her walking yonder; is she not a picter? Let her hoist the Stars and Stripes jest for the colour of the buntin',

and she's such a show as the first theayter in Europe or America couldn't match. Gentlemen all, she's half mine, and every dollar I own in the world is in her, and there's a blind old mother, a wife an' five children, holding on to the tow-rope of the *Jessie Jackson*, and she's got to keep 'em goin'. Captain Flanders is a British gentleman, and his heart has warmed up to a feller-Christian an' a strugglin' brother-sailor in trouble; and he means to chase that lovely barque into a calm, and then put me aboard of her. That's the time of day, gentlemen all; and if e'er an officer aboard this noble ship should find himself in Ephraim Taber's quandary, and Ephraim is somewhar within the circumference of the 'rizon to give him a hand, by God, gentlemen, though it cost him half his fortune, yet he'd sarve him day an' night, tooth an' nail, fist an' finger, blow high or blow low, and this is the hand of an American citizen upon it!"

He struck the brass rail a heavy blow, as if he meant that that should answer the purpose of shaking hands all round.

I now began to see daylight; indeed, the 'cuteness of the Yankee had hit upon the only possible chance he had of recovering his ship, and that was by inducing Captain Flanders to stick to her skirts until a calm should enable us to board her. But suppose she should head out of our course? Would Captain Flanders follow her?

I called Mr. Thomas's attention to the captain's glowing eyes and pale and working face, and whispered that in my opinion the Yankee was not only sharp enough to find out that the captain of the *Waldershare* was not quite right in his mind, but to control him to

his wishes; and that if we did not mind our eye we should be finding ourselves first and second mates of a kind of phantom ship commanded by a lunatic, whose mission was no longer to sail the ship to Calloa, but to pursue what he could not catch.

"I'm prepared for everything and for the worst," said Mr. Thomas, with a comical face of hopelessness. "I give you my word, Lee, I would rather have broken my leg than joined this ship under Captain Flanders."

He had scarcely said this when Obed raised a shout. It was just such a cry as a negro utters when you kick him on the shins. I looked at the barque to which he was pointing frantically with his great dark hand, and at once saw that something was wrong aboard of her.

"See! see!" yelled Captain Taber, who had steadied the glass on the rail, and was peering into it with his back arched like an enraged cat's; "the fellow's left the wheel and boltin' forrards! Thunder an' lightning! look at the wheel; it's flying round like a locomotive's driver! Christ ha' mercy! There she broaches to! Oh, my blessed spars!" and dashing down the telescope he danced about the deck like a madman.

I had my eye on the vessel whilst he raved, and saw her come round into the wind, her canvas shaking furiously. In a second the studding-sail booms broke off clean at the irons as you might snap the stem of a clay pipe; immediately afterwards the fore top-gallant mast toppled over, breaking just under the yard, the flying jib drooped to the water's edge; and there she lay almost on her beam ends, with her jibboom pointing directly athwart our hawse, everything in a wild flutter aloft; the wrecked mast with all its hamper lying

across the fore-topmast stay, the main-topsail yard down on the cap, the top-gallant sail and royal all flying loose, and the whole vessel looking like a wreck and driving bodily to leeward.

Only an artist's pencil could depict the Yankee captain's torture, as it was expressed almost entirely in dumb show, though now and again he screamed out some incoherent phrase. He walloped about the deck as though he had been burnt in both feet, shaking his fist at the barque, tearing off his hat and dashing it on to the quarter-deck, rushing at Obed with outstretched hands as though he would strangle him, then slapping his legs and squirting tobacco juice right and left, without the smallest regard to the eyes of the people around him.

"Get in your stun'sails!" shouted Captain Flanders, whose excitement, if not as frenzied as the Yankee's, was more remarkable. "Aft here, men, and bear a hand! Let go your royal and top-gallant halliards fore and aft! Haul up the mainsail! Starboard your helm—starboard . . . starboard . . . so! Steady now! keep her at that. Smartly aloft, men, and furl those royals. Stand by to back the foreyards!" *

These orders flew out of his mouth in a torrent, and with the *neigh*-like roar that had astonished me on that night when he had silenced the pilot's objection to his sending a boat to the Frenchman on the Goodwins. In truth, the barque had come to a dead

* Captain Flanders was right. If you are the windward ship lay your *fore-topsail* to the mast, for your forward sails are more readily filled than the main, in the event of your needing to forge ahead.—W. C. R.

stop, and we were sweeping down to her at the rate of ten knots an hour.

As we approached, we could form a better opinion of the confusion aboard. No one was at the wheel, but three or four men were hauling on the clewlines. Every rope aboard of her had been let go, but most of them were jammed in the blocks; the sails, blown hard round the masts, prevented the yards from travelling; the wind had twisted the studding-sails around the standing rigging, and, as the vessel gathered sternway, with her starboard broadside hove high, the seas glanced over her sides and fell in sheets upon her decks.

"A pretty mess!" thought I; and had she gone down bodily, I should not have been at all surprised. We ran down to within a quarter of a mile of her to windward, backed the fore-topsail, and lay hove to.

Thinking to make his voice carry, the Yankee skipper jumped on to the poop-rail, and clasping a backstay, put his hand to his mouth, and hailed his vessel with a fury that turned his face black, and I thought that such another effort must rupture a blood-vessel. Nevertheless he hailed again, and yet a third time, in the same wild manner, and was joined by Obed, who had sprung half-way up the lee main rigging, and stood there yelling. Indeed, the contortions of the Yankee and his chief mate were irresistibly absurd, and when to these were added the harsh, rasping *skreek* of the one, and the heavy African *yowl* of the other, the effect was overwhelming, and there was scarcely a man forward in our ship who was not shaking with laughter.

No notice being taken of all this shouting, Captain

Flanders sung out to the steward to bring him his speaking-trumpet.

"Barque ahoy!" he roared.

We all waited for the responding "Hillo!" but no answer came back. All the glasses were in hand, but the only thing resembling a man that I could make out with the naked eye stood at the wheel, keeping it pressed hard over, in the hope, of course, of getting the barque to pay off.

We were all growing rather bewildered, and the Yankee skipper was evidently at a loss, when suddenly Mr. Thomas, who was working away with a glass, cried out, "They're holding up a black board, sir, and there's something written upon it!"

I very plainly beheld the figures of two men uprear themselves behind the high bulwarks, holding between them a large black board. The Yankee sprang off the rail, tumbled on his knees, and levelled his glass.

"I can make it out," cried Mr. Thomas. "'NAT—DEA'—oh! 'NATHAN'S DEAD—MUTINY'S OVER—COME ABOARD.' That's it, sir."

"Ay, that's it!" sung out the Yankee. "Now for a boat, cap'n! By glory, the old hooker's mine agin, arter all! Hurrah, bullies!"

The half-caste had swung himself on to the deck and was already fumbling at the falls of the port quarter-boat. "Pretty cool fish!" thought I. "At all events, he might wait until he gets his orders."

"Lay aft some hands to board the barque!" shouted Captain Flanders. In a moment there was a rush of men. I think every man in the ship, barring the cook and the steward, floundered aft, and the quarter-deck was thick with them.

"Gently!" I sung out, as they rushed, elbowing each other, up the poop-ladders; for, in truth, four men were as much as we needed, seeing that I or Mr. Thomas would have to take charge of the boat, and that we had the Yankee and Obed to carry as well.

"Jump in there, Mr. Lee," called out the captain; "see that the plug's all right."

The men scrambled for a seat on the thwarts, but as I was in command now, I ordered them all out, and choosing four of the strongest hands out of the crowd that stood around, they got into the boat. I followed; then came Obed, who squatted himself in the bows; and last entered the Yankee, after warmly shaking Captain Flanders' hand, and bowing to the passengers with a mighty flourish of his arm—for his hat was on the quarter-deck, and he was too excited to remember that he was without one.

Though it was blowing a very strong breeze of wind, and there was a middling sea on, I had no anxiety in facing it, always having had a great knack at handling a boat; the port boat's falls were also provided with patent hooks, which sprang open and released the boat the moment she touched the water, and relieved the hooks of her weight, and as to leeward of the hull of the *Waldershare* the water was tolerably smooth, we got away from the ship very cleverly, and rowed smartly towards the barque. Still, the sea was heavy enough to demand some very nice steering; one moment we were hove on the summit of a wave, with the foam of it boiling under us and alongside as high as our gunwales, whilst the hull of the heeling barque seemed actually beneath us, as though we looked at her from the top of a hill; the next moment we had

sunk into the hollow of the sea, with walls of roaring green water all around us, and a calm all about, though the wind was whistling over our heads and soaking our hair and faces with the spray it flung down upon us.

The barque was rolling heavily, and the long lines of the setting sun sparkled in her streaming sides as she rose and fell to the seas, which scattered themselves against her sides and flew in smoke over her, or curled in big green combers right on to her decks, whilst all aloft her loose canvas was flapping heavily, wringing the delicate upper spars, or clinging like wet paper round her rigging, and hampering and choking her running gear. Five or six men stood aft watching us, one right on the taffrail holding a coil of rope, which, as we passed under her stern, he flung into the boat; the end was caught by Obed, and a turn taken round the foremost thwart. "In port oars!" I shouted; "pull to starboard, smartly!" and there were we alongside, sheltered indeed from the wind, but rising and falling heavily with the sea. But, then, we were all sailors; four or five ropes' ends were flung over the side, the gangway unshipped, and in a few moments the whole of us had scrambled on to the deck, Obed being the first, and I the second. Plenty of line being given to the boat, she veered away to leeward, and there she lay dancing upon the sea, clear of the vessel's side.

The first object that met my eyes was the body of a man lying on his back, with his arms stretched beyond his head—as dead as a nail. He looked like a fallen giant; he was the biggest man I had ever seen. His chest had fallen in, but the breadth of it, with the

immense thickness of the arms and legs, the huge fleshy throat, and the great hands, with the fingers almost as thick as carrots, curled up with the nails pointing into the broad palms, was something to make a man hold his breath. His eyes were wide open, but only the whites of them were visible; the under jaw had fallen and lay bare a row of ivory-white fangs which a shark might not have disdained, his long reddish locks lay all abroad upon the deck around his head and gradually creeping away from amongst them was a little river of thick black, treacly-looking blood.

Not very far from where he lay was another man lashed to the mizzen-mast with turn upon turn of rope around his waist and chest, with both his hands made fast and hitched down to his knees, which were also tightly bound. He was as dark as Obed, but his brown was not of the same character, being more of the sun-blackened olive of the South American Spaniard. He was a thin, wiry man, with no other clothes on him than a red shirt and a pair of white trousers; his naked feet were almost black from the compression of the rope around his legs. I had thought the half-caste about the most ruffianly animal I had ever seen; but after beholding this man bound like a wild beast to the mizzen-mast, I was obliged to confess that, so far as villainous expressions went, Obed's face was more than matched here. He glanced at us one by one as we scrambled over the side on to the deck, and just looked at Obed—I shall never forget the desperate ferocity, the murderous wickedness of that look whilst I live—then fixed his eyes on the deck, and never again raised them, nor moved a muscle

of his face, though I believe that the strangulation at his chest, legs, and wrists was causing him great pain.

"So," exclaimed Captain Taber, "you've thought better than finish this job, have you? But a pretty cussed mess you've brought the *Jessie* into with your blasted mutineering! Who did that?" he cried, pointing to the dead body.

"I did," answered a burly sailor, an Englishman evidently, and in no sense an ill-looking man. "I wasn't going to be hanged for piracy, and so when we sighted yonder ship, and made out Obed aboard of her, I told Bill here, and Jameson, and Yankee Joe what I guessed her arrant was, and as we had no hand in this here bloody business in the beginning, we detarmined to end it, and so I struck him down, and the others they seized Picador yonder, and these men joined us."

He poured all this forth in a rapid torrent, pointing as he ceased to two of the men who hung back behind the others.

"I know you had no hand in this, Mat," said the skipper, "an' I reckon you've done me a sarvice that'll make us friends. Are you willing to turn to?" he shouted fiercely to the skulking fellows behind, who were two of the four who had planned and effected the seizure of the barque.

"Ay," replied one of them in a dogged voice, "we'll do our work an' sarve ye honestly if ye'll gie us your word ye'll not peach agin us when we gets to Pernambuco, and that ye'll gie us our discharge there."

The Yankee hung in the wind a moment; he glanced at Obed and they exchanged looks.

"Very well," he said, "let it be so. Tally on now and get the barkey straight. Mr. Lee, your men'll help us, I hope."

"Certainly," I answered, thinking I would not give much for the chances of the two men when the *Jessie Jackson* should be once more *en route*.

"Here, carry this thing forward out of the road," shouted Captain Taber, indicating the dead body with a lift of his foot. A couple of the men dragged the corpse out of sight. The skipper never seemed to notice the man who was lashed to the mizzen-mast, but springing on to the weather bulwarks and holding on to the rigging, he began to sing out his orders, whilst Obed took the wheel.

Now that he was aboard his own vessel and could deliver his orders I at once saw that the Yankee was a thorough sailor. My four men, in addition to his own crew, made eleven hands for him to control. As I found that I should be only in the road by seconding his orders, I let him have his own way, whilst presently, not being able to endure the sight of the sufferings of the wretch at the foot of the mizzen-mast, I stepped up to him and eased away the turns around his legs and body and wrists, though without loosing him. He never gave me a "thank you," nor so much as lifted his eyes; he probably believed that the moment the *Waldershare* was out of sight they would hang him, and I have no doubt they were all lawless enough aboard that vessel to do worse things than that.

By dint of squaring the mainyards, flattening in the foresheets, hauling up the mainsail and lowering the mizzen, the Yankee got his barque to pay off; and

when they had filled away forward and got way on her, they backed the mainyard and hove her to. The sun was now very near the horizon, and I was anxious to regain the *Waldershare* whilst there was still light, for darkness follows sunset quickly in these latitudes. Soon after we had boarded the barque, the *Waldershare* swung her foreyards, and then squaring away fore and aft, came gracefully rolling and plunging past under the barque's stern, when she put her helm down and lay to abreast of us about three hundred yards to leeward, where she remained stationary, waiting for us to rejoin her, her bows rising and sinking like a race-horse pawing the ground and arching his neck eager to be gone, while her decks were like a constellation with the flashing of the sun in her brass and skylights, and the water poured from her bows, as she lifted them, in long white lines.

With the skipper at the wheel, and Obed to make an eighth man aloft, the Yankee would have hands enough to clear away the wreck forward, the more especially as the breeze was moderating, the clouds high, and there was every sign of fair weather. So, telling him I must begone, I sung out to my men to lay aft and get the boat alongside. However, before the Yankee would part with us, he jumped below and brought up a bottle of brandy, and gave each of my men a large dram to drink his health in. At the same time he presented me with a small, very elegantly chased gold box for holding pipe-lights, and begged me to keep it as a little token of his gratitude. He then bade me repeat his thanks to Captain Flanders, wringing my hand repeatedly. The poor fellow was really grateful, and I was heartily glad he had got

his vessel again; though, as I glanced at the blood-stain on the deck, and at the man bound to the mizzen-mast, and at the faces of the crew, who, with the exception of two were foreigners in coloured shirts, black-bearded and with large rings in their ears, I should not have cared to bet a dollar that the Yankee would be let live to see the port he was bound to. To manage such a crew as that a man should never go without a revolver, and wear a steel shirt under his waistcoat.

We gained the *Waldershare* as the upper limb of the sun was hovering on the rugged horizon and looking as though the hull of some great ship was burning there, and her timbers all of a deep scarlet glow; and so quickly did the shadows come running out of the east that, before we had the quarter-boat hoisted, it was almost dark and the stars shining.

Nelly was so overjoyed to see me come over the side, that she forgot her customary prudence and ran to meet me. However, though Thomas looked up at me with a grin, I doubt if the skipper saw the action. Any way, I passed on to him and made my report, and then came back to Nelly, and stood with her and Thomas watching the barque, telling them what I had seen on board, and producing the Yankee's gift, which I said I should value as a curiosity and as the memorial of a singular adventure.

The barque was astern of us, but had braced her mainyards round and was lying up so as to make a more westerly course than we. She loomed under the stars like a pale cloud, but even with the help of the glass I could not make out how they were managing with their wrecked top-gallant mast, and the hamper

of studding-sails and canvas that lay all in a muddle forward. In twenty minutes' time she was a faint glimmering patch on our weather quarter, and then she entirely vanished.

We never knew the origin of the mutiny: the Yankee had told Captain Flanders *how*, but not *why*, it happened, and I could not discover that the crew had said a word to the men who boarded her with me. But Obed's face had satisfied me that the cause of it was bad treatment, and the Yankee's very reserve made me the more inclined to think so. And do not let the reader flatter himself that incidents of this nature are rare at sea. Fire, tempest, collision, overloaded or leaky ships, by no means make out the whole catalogue of the causes of maritime disaster. Let any man go and examine for himself the crews many vessels ship, and he will agree with me that mutiny and the wilful destruction of ships ought to be included as a fertile factor among the causes of those disasters which are generalized in our ignorance under the heading of "Missing." However, maritime evils are things which landsmen refuse to take any interest in and a writer only proves tedious by endeavouring to point them out.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN FLANDERS.

WE took the trades in lat. 28° N., and bowled merrily along with the strong, steady breeze well on the quarter, our studding-sails expanded like the wings of a bird, the white trade-clouds sweeping across a

windy blue sky, a young moon shining over us at night, and the constellations familiar to the eyes of all northern dwellers verging farther and farther towards the horizon astern. These trades are glorious winds, and give the sailor nothing to do in his watch below but lay in his bunk and listen to the buzz of the froth at the bows, and the humming of the canvas.

The captain spent much of his time in his cabin, and this gave me many opportunities of being with Nelly, and many a long hour did she and I spend together talking, as we leaned over the ship's side and watched the foam spattering past; so that these winds brought us the happiest days we had yet spent, and our hearts were as gay as love and health, and the glorious panorama of the swirling ship, and the leaping seas, and the sunshine stooping to the flying clouds by day, and the stars shining like drops of molten silver among the wool-white shapes which ran over them by night, could make us. Our trysting-place, when I was not officer of the watch, and when the skipper was out of sight, and when the night had fallen so as to hide us from the eyes of the men forward, was to leeward of the poop, just forward of the quarter-boat, where the shadow of it made a deeper gloom; and there very often little Thomas would join us, and talk about his wife and the brand-new furniture he had put into the lodgings for her, and the savings he had placed in the bank to her name.

It was pleasant to listen to the gentle voice of this thorough-bred sailor and genial-hearted little man when he talked of his courtship, and how she had at first refused him, and how he went another voyage and then proposed again, and was accepted; and how he

had carried her to the West-end of London to choose a fine dress to be married in, and how, after all the fitting and trimming and trouble, it never arrived in time, and she had to be married in a plain dress, and how she had cried with vexation, and how he had turned to and cheered her up. She was a long way astern of him now, he would say; but the end of his tow-rope was in her hands: he knew the way home, and would get the scent by waiting a bit.

Indeed, he grew mightily fond of Nelly—much because she never seemed tired of listening to his yarns about his wife and asking questions about her—and he was with her as often as he could find an opportunity. He got to dress at last expressly for her and for nobody else, for Madam Espinosa laughed at him in her sleeve, and he knew it, and hated her for it, as he had a right to do. He had as many suits of clothes in his chest as all hands put together could have mustered, and was every day appearing in something new. As for his waistcoats, I never saw the like of them for number and variety: they were mostly velvet, and of different colours, chiefly presents from his wife and her relations, and as he appeared in them one by one, so Nelly admired them, and with a sincerity that gave him great happiness.

However, there was a cloud on the little man that was daily growing gloomier, and it filled him with uneasiness. This was the captain's behaviour to him. Latterly, it had grown so marked, that I used to think the skipper's eccentricity had taken this form for a change, and that he was done with his spirits in order to convert Thomas into an illusion.

A few days after we had taken the trades the

chief mate joined me on the poop, although it was his watch below, and said to me, "Lee, what on earth is the cause of Captain Flanders' manner? He was offensive enough, in a quiet way, before we sighted the Yankee barque, but from the hour we left her astern his behaviour has grown *hideous*. At dinner to-day I happened to have my eyes on him—although, God knows, I was thinking of anything else—when he bellowed out to me to know why I stared at him; and then addressing himself to Mr. Black, he said, 'Is it not extraordinary that my chief officer should go on watching me as though he had a pistol in his pocket, and was only waiting until I looked another way to let fly at my head?' This, of course, made the Scotchman squint at me as though I really meant to assassinate the captain; though Madam Espinosa said, 'A monkey may look at a king, mayn't he, captain?' with a stress upon *monkey*, and then giggled as if she would choke. If I am to be affronted in this way, as good as called a murderer to my face, insulted by one passenger and distrusted by another, I shall give up. I shall tell the captain I'm done. Does he think I sneaked on board through a scupper-hole? does he take me for a long-shoreman? Let him teach me something I don't know, and his cook shall pull my nose."

He was purple with rage, although he had begun quietly enough: his Welsh blood was like a kettle full of hot water; a very little fire set it boiling. At the same time it was impossible to miss the bewilderment that lay under his passion; indeed, he was not only puzzled to know what he had done to make the captain hate him, but he saw himself being gradually drawn into a muddle that was likely to end in doing him

serious professional injury, and whilst he could not tell how on earth he was drifting into the danger, he could not see how to check his progress.

I had no consolation to offer him. My frankness at the beginning of the voyage had rather frightened me on reflection, and I did not like to say what I honestly believed, that the captain was growing madder every day. The mere fact that nobody seemed to notice this but Nelly and myself was a hint to me to be extremely cautious how I gave my conviction expression. Whatever the Espinosas might be, Mr. Black was no fool, slow and thick as he was; and that he did not seem to notice the captain's behaviour any more than Mr. Thomas was able to interpret it correctly, was proof to me that up to the present moment no significance was attached to it; in short, that if Mr. Black and the others took notice of his manner, they merely reckoned it as a little odd and that was all.

And why not? Whatever might have been whispered, there was not a man in the *Waldershare* who would have cared to sincerely admit that he believed her commander, who had absolute disposal of the ship and the lives of everybody in her, who was entirely beyond control, and could do as he pleased, was *mad*. So far he had navigated the vessel well; he had proved himself a capable seaman; the only distinct indication of his madness that he had yet given outside the hints on which I had grounded my distrust, was his behaviour at Lanyon's funeral; but the passengers had not witnessed this; I do not think a word was said about it to them, and I have already shown what effect it produced forward.

Therefore all I thought it advisable to say to Mr.

Thomas was to recommend him to exercise patience, and to believe that, as the captain's prejudice was entirely without foundation, it must pass. But he shook his head.

"No," said he, "it won't pass; and as to exercising patience, who the deuce can stand being *hazed* at table for raising one's eyes? That idiot Black avoided me just now in the cuddy. Can it be possible that Captain Flanders wants to raise a scare over the Yankee mutiny, and to imply that I—a gentleman, an officer in the British mercantile marine, with a captain's certificate in my desk at home—that *I* am capable of causing insubordination among a crew?"

In my own mind I thought the captain mad enough to believe this, and, indeed, as I had observed that his manner to Thomas had grown more pronounced since the Yankee adventure, and Thomas had also noticed the circumstance, the little man's suggestion, though offered in a spirit of the most contemptuous scepticism, struck me somewhat as a revelation. However, no more was said between us at that time, and for some days Mr. Thomas made no further reference to the captain, nor did I gather that any exceptional conduct had given him new cause for complaint.

We lost the trades at $3^{\circ} 17'$ north of the line, having made the whole distance from Gravesend in twenty-seven days. This brought us to Wednesday, the 23rd of July.

We were now in the calm latitudes, the equatorial belt of baffling catpaws and glassy seas. At noon we were shadowless; the sun stood right over the mainmast, and all the horizon swam and quivered in a haze of heat; the ocean lay like a surface of quick-

silver, along which the swell, breaking into long lines of golden fire under the sun, ran languidly, and the paint on the ship's side bubbled into blisters, and the pitch in the seams of the deck was as soft as wax before a fire, and stuck to the soles of one's boots, while the woodwork that lay exposed to the sun burnt the flesh of the hand that rested a moment upon it. The trade-wind failed us in the morning watch, and before noon we lay roasting in a dead calm. The cuddy was like an oven, and the wind-sail did nothing for us, for there was no breeze to swell it; the awning gave some protection to the head, but even under it the deck was as hot as though there were flames beneath; the water was as transparent as glass, and by getting into the gig that was slung astern and looking down, one could see the rudder to the very bottom of it, and the copper quivering with a yellow sheen deep in the white transparency. The tar lay all moist upon the shrouds and backstays, and blackened the hand that touched them; the sails hung bleached to the whiteness of snow, and looked a hundred years old; the heat of the galley drove the cook into the shadow of the top-gallant fore-castle, and the smoke of the chimney went straight up the foremast in a blue line; the pigs under the long-boat lay, with heaving bellies, on their sides, the hens in the coops squatted in a fluff of feathers with their beaks open, and wherever a shadow was cast upon the deck, there were men sitting with their feet bare, their shirts wide open, and their faces streaming with perspiration.

All that day not a catspaw darkened the water, not a brace was touched.

At last the sun went down, and we watched with

relief the vast orb, throbbing red as blood, sink behind the clear unbroken line of the horizon, without a cloud to soften his crimson fires, whilst in the glassy surface of the water the reflection lay in a purple band, the lowermost point of which seemed to stretch within a hundred feet of the ship, though, as the orb gradually veered lower and lower, this magnificent stream of light upon the sea shortened away from us and ran flashing towards the horizon, as if, indeed, it were a tangible belt of gold which the sun was trailing across the bosom of the deep, and dragging away with it behind the world of waters, until the last fragment of the sun vanished, and with it its glowing reflection, and then there shot up out of the horizon into the red sky long spikes of dazzling dark-golden light, the extremities of which could be followed by the eye into the very zenith, whilst the reflection of these fiery lines in the sea was so clear and sharp that the whole of the red west above and below the water-line was barred by a huge flaming wheel that faded quickly, until nothing of all this magnificence remained but a slight hectic upon a deep-blue ground, upon which the stars flashed as bright and round as little moons.

Some hands were called aft to furl the awning; they came along on their naked feet, and made no noise; we spoke almost in a whisper, for the darkness had followed the blaze in the west so quickly as to fill us with a kind of awe, and all upon the deep lay so great a hush that the mind by instinct caught the silence, as it were, by imitating it.

"Will," exclaimed Nelly, coming over to where I stood and speaking very softly, "come with me; I want to show you something."

I followed her to the side of the poop, where she had been standing looking into the water, whilst the men were furling the awning.

"What is it?" I asked.

"See there!" she said, pointing to the water just under the quarter-boat, the shadow of which was noticeable.

I looked and saw an outline of blue light close against the surface, so faint that it was almost impossible to tell the shape of it; but on a sudden it began to move. The outline sparkled and took the form of a great fish of immensely solid and rounded proportions at the head, tapering away aft into a tail, the vibration of which was distinctly visible in the sheen of the phosphorus, as the ghostly, silent outline passed away towards the bows of the ship.

"What is it, Will?" asked Nelly in a frightened voice. "That is the second one that has passed in a few minutes."

"A shark, Nell. Look! yonder's another; there—a little this side the reflection of that large star."

"What dreadful creatures, and how quiet!"

Just then a fiddle began to scrape forward, and a man sang the first bar or two of a song; but the accompaniment was evidently not to his taste, for I heard a little wrangle, and presently the fiddle struck up again; but this time the singer accompanied himself, and twanged the fiddle-strings with his fingers instead of scraping them with the bow, so that the notes were much softer, or at all events harmonized better with the singer's voice, which was a very sweet, plaintive tenor. The singer was a Norwegian, and the song was one of the ballads of his country, I believe, though

what it was about I am sure I don't know; but the air was pretty, and the fellow sang it with taste and feeling; his voice rang upon the night with a kind of moan in it like the notes of a flute, and whilst he sang the ship would now and again heave lazily, and set the lofty sails gently flapping, whilst the wash of the water alongside fell upon the ear like a sob.

The song was a long one—most sailors' songs are, for the verses are nothing to them; they only care about the tune, and will repeat the same words over and over again—and Nelly and I, and indeed all hands, were listening to it with great interest, when the captain called me. He was standing near the skylight, and I went up to him.

"I can't stand that song, Mr. Lee; it irritates me. I never heard such a miauling. Go forward and stop it, but don't say you got your orders from me. It is never my wish to interfere with the men's harmless enjoyments. But stop *that* song and at once."

He turned hurriedly and walked aft to the wheel. I went along the main-deck and hailed the forecabin in a quiet voice.

"Who's that singing?"

The singer immediately ceased.

"It's Petersen, sir," said one of the men.

"Why, Petersen," I sung out, "that's a very pretty song, my lad; but can't you give us something more lively? The ladies say it's too dark to listen to such a song as that."

Some of the men laughed.

"Billy," cried a voice, "give us 'Tommy's got a wooden leg;' that's a regular A 1 song, and sure to please the ladies."

Whereupon some one else proposed another song, and in a minute they were all calling out for different songs, all to please the ladies. However, I had put a stopper on the Norwegian, and having accomplished my object I returned to the poop. When the captain caught sight of me he again called me to him. He had taken his stand close against the quarter-boat, well out of earshot of the wheel, and in the shadow of the mizzen-mast. Nelly and the other passengers were together on the opposite side of the deck, so that where the skipper stood was secluded enough. I noticed this, and that is why I have set it down; for it struck me, from the posture he had assumed and the spot he had stationed himself in, that he had something important to say.

"Have you stopped the men's singing altogether?" he asked.

"I suspect I have made them coy, sir, by telling them that the ladies are listening," I replied, laughing.

"Where is Mr. Thomas?"

"In his cabin, I believe, or else on the quarter-deck. I have not seen him since he went below."

"You and he are pretty good friends, are you not?" said he in a soft way, and speaking almost in a whisper.

"Yes, sir; I like Mr. Thomas very well indeed," I answered, a good deal struck by the manner in which he asked his question.

"Does he ever talk to you about me, Mr. Lee?" he inquired blandly, and with a note of kindness in his voice.

"Why, yes, sometimes, sir," I answered, pausing a moment before I answered; for I had now made up

my mind to keep the lead going, as I had no idea into what channel he might make me drift.

"Sometimes only, eh?—not very often, Mr. Lee? And pray, what is the nature of his talk—the general character of it? Think. How does he usually express himself about me?"

"Really, sir, I am unable to tax my memory to that extent. We have often talked together, and no doubt your name has been mentioned; but I cannot pretend to remember what was said by either of us."

He remained silent for some moments, and I heard him tapping the deck very softly with his foot.

"Have you ever noticed him talking to the men, Mr. Lee?" he asked presently.

"Never beyond giving them instructions, sir."

"I thought I saw him go forward about a quarter of an hour ago. Are you sure you did not notice him somewhere about when you went along the main-deck?" he asked sternly.

"Quite sure," I replied.

"For Heaven's sake!" he exclaimed in a low voice, broken with agitation, and glancing up and down the deck, "don't let your sympathy as a shipmate stand between that man and me. It is your *duty*, Mr. Lee, to answer my questions truthfully, and to aid me in immediately checking any influence that is likely to bring this ship into peril."

"I know what my duty is, sir, and I trust that you have already seen enough of my character to judge that I do not need any appeal of the kind you have thought fit to make to me to discharge my duty," I exclaimed, with a warmth I afterwards regretted, remembering that I was addressing a man who was not

responsible for his words; "but if you mean to suggest that the chief officer is likely to act in such a way as to bring this ship into peril, I can only solemnly assure you that you are greatly mistaken, and that your suspicions do an excellent seaman and an honourable man a very grievous injury."

He bent forward to look me close in the face, but not being sure of his intention, I drew back; on which he reared himself up and shook his head several times. Rather from the wish to serve Thomas by getting to know more of the captain's notions about him than from mere curiosity, I asked—

"May I inquire, sir, what Mr. Thomas has done to make you think him capable of acting treacherously?"

He held up his finger, but he never answered me. Whether he meant to convey some reply by the motion of his arm I do not know; but as the gesture was altogether without meaning it was not a little alarming, and I watched him closely, ready for his next move.

Suddenly putting his hand against his left side, he exclaimed, "Feel here, Mr. Lee."

I hesitated, for it seemed a sort of liberty to take; but he cried out with a sudden passion, "Feel, sir—feel here, as I order you."

I put my hand to his side and then drew away.

"What did you feel?" he inquired, in a low, trembling voice.

"Something very much like a revolver," I replied.

"Is it customary," said he, in a smooth voice, "for the commander of a ship like the *Waldershare* to carry loaded fire-arms about with him? You have been some years at sea—answer my question."

"I don't think it is, sir."

"Why, then, do I carry this revolver about with me all day and sleep with it under my pillow at night?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Captain Flanders."

"Because," he answered, breathing short and bending so close to me that his breath fell warm on my cheek, "I have been forewarned that my life will be attempted, and the name of the man has been given me."

I was so astonished and confounded by his earnestness, that I may as well honestly declare I believed, for the moment, he was speaking the truth.

"Do you really mean to say," I cried, "that there is some one aboard this ship who is waiting for an opportunity to——"

"Hush!" he whispered, and he broke into a low laugh, the first laugh I had heard come from his lips since we had left the docks. If ever madness spoke in a laugh it spoke here; the sound brought me to instantly, and I understood the dangerous delusion that possessed him.

"Keep what has passed between us a secret—mind! not a word!" he exclaimed. "But," he continued, lowering his tone into a whisper that I had to strain my ear to catch, "you may tell Mr. Thomas, if you like, that I am not only forewarned, but *forearmed*, Mr. Lee. Do you follow me?—*forearmed*. Say, if you like, that I made you put your hand upon it, that my heart beats under it, and that with a movement of my wrist I can command six lives!"

He walked away to the end of the poop, and stood looking with his face over the stern.

What I had heard and discovered made me so restless and agitated that I scarcely knew what I was at. I paced about the forward end of the poop, watching the man's motionless figure with an anxiety so keen that I believed it to be an inspiration, and imagined that presently he would play us or himself some devilish trick. On one side of the poop were the passengers, a dark group, Madam Espinosa's laugh sounding often, while her husband cackled to Mr. Black, whose gutturals were as frequent as madam's silly laughs. A little to the right and beyond them stood the man at the wheel, with the haze of the binnacle falling upon him; and on the other side was the figure of Captain Flanders gazing and gazing astern without a move of his body, whilst the slow heave of the breathless sea made the stars lazily slide up and down past him. I thought if the group on the port side of the deck only knew what was in the mind of that silent form, the laugh and the cackle, and the guttural "echs!" and "ehs!" would take another and a very different note.

Had we carried a ship's doctor I should have told him what had passed, and gone to work to secure the captain before he did any mischief. But as matters stood I felt altogether helpless. If I spoke to the passengers I should probably frighten them without doing any good; even though I succeeded in making them believe me. If I went among the crew I could not be sure of their support. Suppose some of them should come aft and tell the captain I had called him mad, and had asked them to help me to secure him, and he, with the cunning I was bound to believe his madness must give him, should persuade them that

I and Mr. Thomas were in a conspiracy to wrest the command of the ship out of his hands? He had only to order the chief mate and me into irons, and the thing would be done. There would then be no check upon him; he might navigate the ship anyhow; I should not be at hand to give Nelly any help if she needed it; and my own chances in life, in a professional sense, would be ruined—that is, if the ship under his sole charge ever lived to arrive in port.

These thoughts hurried through my mind as I paced about the deck, and they will fairly serve to lay the helplessness of my position before you.

After standing for at least ten minutes looking over the stern, the captain crossed to the passengers and exchanged some sentences with them; he then gave his arm to Nelly and walked to and fro the poop with her. The sky was a marvellous panorama of stars, covered with a brilliant dust from horizon to horizon, among which the stars of the first magnitude seemed to hang low, and dropped flakes of silver into the water. Down in the north-west there was a continuous glancing of sheet-lightning. The heavy dew cooled the atmosphere somewhat, but the men preferred the deck to the hot fore-castle, faintly lighted by the smoky oil-lamp that flickered under a blackened beam, and lay in groups here and there, fanned by the foresail as it idly flapped to the roll of the ship. "Hillo!" I exclaimed, "what's this?" as something clawed the hind part of my legs. It was the captain's dog, but not being in the mood for caresses of that kind, I gave him a gentle kick under the tail and drove him aft. Every roll of the vessel brought the dew down like rain out of the sails. Was there never to be any more

wind in this part of the world? And I looked all round the horizon for any flaw or tremor among the star-flakes in the water. Presently, my sight going into the south-west, I thought I saw a light down there that looked but a yellow sickly star, if star it were. I kept my eyes on it, and the passengers being silent for a few moments, and the sails hanging motionless, I heard a kind of pulsing in the air, and understanding the meaning of the sound, I dived for the glass.

"There's a steamer's light right abeam of us, sir!" I sung out.

The captain stopped, with Nelly on his arm, looked, and then answered, "I see her, sir," and resumed his walk.

"Shall we show a light?" I called. "She appears to be heading right for us, sir."

"Ay, show a light at both ends of the ship," he answered, walking all the time and speaking as if I had no right to bother him.

A lantern was swung in the fore-rigging and another on the gaff-vang, so that the coming vessel might know the length of us, and how we lay. I believe she had not seen us before, but no sooner were our lights exposed, than she starboarded her helm to pass under our stern. Until she was close to we could not make out what sort of vessel she was, and then there loomed up within a few cables' length of our quarter a huge black man-of-war as big as an island, ship-rigged, with immensely long yards, a squab fat funnel just before the mainmast, and a bow as high as a cliff, curving out with a stem that subtended into the water at an angle like a beach. All was as still as death aboard of her; no smoke came from her

funnel; the only light I could make out was a lantern as brilliant as a bull's-eye slung half-way up her foremast; all that could be heard was the splash of water from the discharge-pipes and the hollow throbbing of her machinery, and the seething of foam as she tore up the sea with her stem. The stars went shooting through her rigging as she passed, like a constellation of fire-flies playing over her spars and among her shrouds. Lofty as was the *Waldershare*, I doubt if her royal-masthead reached half-way as high as the main-topmast of this war-ship. The gloom and the starlight probably magnified the proportions of the vessel in our eyes, but as she loomed past, the vast shape, urged by a power invisible and, but for the hollow vibrations of the engines, inaudible, with her hull blotting out the stars high above the horizon, and her mastheads soaring into the gloom beyond the reach of the sight, she looked the biggest vessel in the world, and the creation of a race of giants. What countryman she was, whence and where bound to, I don't know; she was steaming about eight knots, heading N. E. and by E., and she passed away into the darkness of the horizon like a phantom ship, not a sign of life aboard, and her engines sounding as though she breathed heavily as she went.

Captain Flanders, never letting go of Nelly, stopped walking a few moments to look at the big ship as she went by, and then started afresh. I began to think that my sweetheart must have had enough of walking by this time, and watched them. What was he telling her? that a spirit had warned him his life was in danger, and that he carried a loaded pistol in his pocket? He was mighty earnest—so much I could tell

by the tone of his voice—and his hand incessantly sawed the air, and once or twice he stopped and pointed upwards, as though he were explaining the names of the stars to her. At last he made a long halt close to the quarter-boat, just where he had spoken to me, and there they stood for about five minutes; after which, and rather suddenly, Nelly walked away, advanced a few paces towards me, stopped with an air of irresolution, and finally went below.

I wondered what all this could signify. In a few minutes the steward rang his bell in the cuddy to announce that grog was on the table. The Espinosas and Mr. Black, however, stayed under deck but for a very short while; indeed, the cabin was as hot as an oven, and the smell of the warm varnish, coupled with the hundred indescribable odours which creep up out of the hold of a ship in sweltering weather, made the cuddy extremely unpleasant. Espinosa lighted a cigar almost as long as his arm, and getting a flag for a pillow, laid himself flat on the deck; Mr. Black dozed over a large meerschaum; and Madam Espinosa entertained herself with her own thoughts, occasionally asking questions in Spanish of her husband, who sometimes muttered *si, si*, and sometimes made no reply.

On a sudden I felt a little air, and glancing up found the main-topsail aback.

"Hands aft to the braces!" I sung out. "Wheel there, how's her head?"

"East-half-north, sir."

"Man the port main-braces—put your helm aport—let go those starboard mizzen-topsail braces and shiver the sail, my lads."

In a few moments the ship felt the light breeze, and was heading her course with the yards hard against the starboard rigging. The sound of the lip, lip, lipping of the water alongside was delightful after the stagnation of the last twelve hours. The surface of the water was all blurred and darkened by the warm sweet wind, but the night was quite cloudless, and one looked in vain for any place for the wind to come from. Here was a breeze that might carry us across the equator into the south-east trades, and any way it was a slant to make the most of. The worst part of these latitudes, worse even than the intolerable heat, is the having to watch for every draught of air that flutters the dog-vane, and box the yards about to every shadow that creeps along the water in order to sneak across the Line. So I boarded the main-tack, triced out the bowlines, set the crossjack and every fragment of fore and aft canvas until the ship was a great cloud of sail. The water was now full of fire alongside, and from under our counter the large bubbles sped away, buzzing merrily, every sail was drawing and silent, and the ship was as still as if she floated down a river.

I had thought the songs of the men would bring the captain on deck, but he did not make his appearance. Presently the ropes were all coiled over their pins, and the men gone forward. Seeing a shadow thrown on to the quarter-deck, I looked over the poop-rail, and there stood Nelly.

"Is Captain Flanders up there?" she asked in a whisper. I said no, and she came up. "I have something to tell you, Will," said she, with an embarrassed air. "It is very absurd, and yet it has vexed me, too—more than it need do, you will say."

"What is it, Nelly?"

"You will scarcely believe it," she whispered, taking my hand, and keeping her head bent. "Captain Flanders has asked me to marry him."

"What! asked you to marry him?"

"Yes, dear," said she, controlling herself and speaking quietly. "He said I was the only woman he had ever met who appeared to understand his views on religion; and then he exclaimed, with his voice all of a tremble, 'Miss Maitland, will you be my wife?'"

"The devil take him! And what did you say?"

"For some moments I really didn't know *what* to say, Will. Knowing him to be crazy, I felt rather frightened. Then I thought to myself, 'If I answer him *too* plainly, he will suspect there is something between Will and me,' and I saw that I should act unwisely in doing or saying anything likely to arouse his jealousy. So I answered—but I don't really believe he heard all my answer, for I mumbled my words terribly; my heart beat so, Will!—that his proposal had taken me by surprise, and I said that, whatever my inclinations might be, I should have to consult my friends in England before I could give him an answer. And so I begged him not to refer to the subject until we arrived home."

"Poor wretch! that was a caulker, Nell," said I, laughing. "And has he promised?"

"Yes; I made him promise on his honour. I am horribly annoyed, Will. It is simply the result of my being too amiable—listening to his nonsense with a grave face when Madam Espinosa would have burst out laughing. Yet I thought that was the right policy

for your sake. I wanted to make a friend of him, but not a lover—oh dear, Will, not a lover.”

“What was he talking about before he asked you to marry him? He has been dragging you up and down the deck for nearly an hour.”

“Quite an hour, and my legs ache dreadfully.”

“I’ll fetch a chair——”

“No, dear, I prefer standing. I can run down these steps should he come out of his cabin, for he must not see us together now, Will—I mean, much together. Did you ask what he talked about? I scarcely know; it was chiefly about spirits, I believe; but I was thinking about other things at the time, and what little I had heard was put out of my head by the fright he gave me when he asked me to marry him.”

“Did he tell you that his life was in danger?”

“No. What do you mean? Is it?”

“No more than mine is, dear; but I have discovered to-night enough to convince me that he is dangerously mad.”

“Because he has asked me to marry him?” she exclaimed, laughing.

“I wish that were all; but ask no questions, Nell.”

“What an adventure! what an adventure to tell Phœbe!” she said, with something in her voice betwixt a laugh and a sigh. “Yet who could help feeling sorry for him? When he talks rationally I could not imagine a better-bred man. The submissive manner in which he received my answer and gave me his promise was really touching. He released my arm instantly, and as I left him he bowed to me with great dignity and gentleness.”

She took the womanly view of him, and I loved

her all the better for her true-hearted sympathy. I was sorry enough for him too, God knows; for what is there under heaven more dreadful than the spectacle of a mind unhinged, with glancings of rationality which only serve to deepen and darken the contrast of the horrible disease that is hourly eating out of the soul the instincts and elements of responsibility which give it its manliness and beauty? But I also thought of him as the captain of a large ship, with forty-five human beings committed to his discretion and judgment, every day bringing with it some new problem of navigation and seamanship that demanded a cool and healthy head for its solution; I thought, I say, of the tremendous responsibilities imposed upon him by his position as commander; and then I considered that he was mad and ought not to hold his post, but that I could see no way of procuring his removal without running a risk that might prove professionally fatal to me; so that these reflections deadened my sympathy greatly, and made me think of him with another mood than that in which Nelly spoke of him. As to his avowal to Nelly, her account of it had indeed annoyed me, as was perhaps natural. My first movement was one of resentment that he should have dared to offer marriage to my sweetheart; but so changeful or mingled are our passions, that his very avowal, when I came to consider it, made me more sorry for him than I had been before, and witness his madness in a sadder light. This poor fellow had fallen in love with Nelly, not knowing that she was betrothed to me; and I found it a kind of unconscious flattery, and it touched me. His madness would make him feel a lonely man, and it shocked me to think how it must drive him further and further

away from all sympathy with his sane and natural desire for love, and leave him finally an object of fear and compassion, and to tortures of mind beyond the reach of any healthy imagination to conceive.

After Nelly had left me I paced about the poop lost in thought, and scarcely noticed the departure of the passengers to their cabins, until, on looking about me, I found myself alone. The captain's dog lay on the deck near the wheel, and I stood stroking it with my foot for some moments, watching the reflection of a large star as the water ran over it in little spaces of foam, which glanced and vanished like the play of light upon silver threads. It was now hard upon eleven o'clock, which left me another hour's watch to stand; the breeze had slightly freshened, the stars had a sharper light, and the bluish glint in their lustre made me hope this wind was likely to hold, and the surface of the water was now very dark, though the phosphorus sparkled brightly all around the ship, and the horizon was a clear black line against the sky.

I stood near the wheel watching the compass, anxious that the wind should come more free; for, as it was, the ship with her spars all erect was looking up almost right into it; half the main-royal was aback, and the crossjack bowline was hauled so taut that the bolt-rope made a sharp angle. The ship was jammed in the wind; still she frothed a pretty wake, and kept the quiet sea slapping her on the weather bow; and as I watched how swiftly the foam of some little wave breaking over against the quarter slipped away and was swallowed up in the gloom before its froth had seethed itself into dark water again, I thought the *Waldershare* must be a witch, and, with a hundred

tons less of dead weight in her, the fastest thing afloat.

"Keep her full," said I to the man who steered; "if she breaks off she must go. Let us cross the Line, anyhow; such a day's calm as we have left astern is enough to last a man a whole voyage."

Just as I said this up came the skipper. He approached the binnacle, looked at it, then aloft, then around him, then peered at me as though he wondered who I was. I waited for him to address me, but he said nothing, and went to leeward and gazed at the passing water for a time, and then came back to the binnacle.

Presently he asked in a hollow voice what o'clock it was.

"Just upon six bells, sir." And at that moment the bell was struck.

He seemed like a man awakened from a sleep, all in a flurry, and stared about him in the queerest way. His dog, hearing his voice, came up and pawed him, standing on its hind legs with its fore-paws upon his coat. He picked the dog up and carried it to windward, talking to it; then all on a sudden he threw the poor brute overboard, crying out, "I shall follow you soon, Bodkin! Good-bye, old friend. Poor Bodkin! good-bye!" and he wrung his hands, and dashed them with a wild gesture against his face, and shouted out, "Can you see him, Mr. Lee?"

I made him no answer, being much shocked, not only by the madness but by the cruelty of the action; but the fellow who was steering answered, "The sharks 'll have had him by this time: there are two of 'em following the ship;" and as if in confirmation of the

man's remark, I heard, or fancied I heard, a faint, wild yelp far astern.

The captain walked right up to me and looked me for a moment or two in the face without speaking. Remembering what he carried in his breast-pocket, I held my two hands ready poised for the first suspicious movement.

"It is hard to part with old friends, Mr. Lee," he exclaimed in a broken voice. "I have had that dog five years, and he was very fond of me. He has gone first, and it's my turn next. Poor Bodkin!"

He looked over his shoulder at the sea, edging away from me until he reached the companion, and still looking astern. "Good-bye, Bodkin! good-bye, old friend!" he exclaimed, waving his hand; and he went below slowly, pausing at each step of the ladder, and sighing heavily.

I pulled my cap off and wiped my forehead, for the perspiration was thick on my face. I had half a mind to call Mr. Thomas at once in order to confer with him, but I was afraid the skipper might be lurking in the cuddy and would hear me; I therefore abandoned that idea and resolved to wait until eight bells, when it would be my duty to arouse the chief mate.

I quitted the wheel in order that the man might have no excuse to comment upon what he had seen. I was never before so troubled in my mind in all my life. I felt it would be impossible for us to go on much longer in this way; something was bound to happen sooner or later to open the eyes of the passengers and crew to the captain's condition, and if a disaster occurred, should not I deserve great blame for

not providing against it, by alarming the men and securing the captain? It could be said afterwards, "This man knew the captain was mad, and owns now that he thought the ship in jeopardy in consequence of the captain's madness: but he never interfered; he let things take their course." Well, that would be true from one side of the question, but in reality it was more Mr. Thomas's place to provide for the ship's safety against the captain's madness. I was but second mate. Moreover, he had eyes as good as mine to see for himself whether Captain Flanders was mad or not; and his not choosing to think the captain mad was sure to make any resolution I might form to prove him mad doubly fatal to myself in the event of failure.

Eight bells were now struck, and I heard them forward thumping the scuttle and rousing the sleepers in the forecabin. I called Mr. Thomas, and returned to the poop to wait until he dressed himself. A hand out of the port watch came aft to take the wheel, and I heard the man whom he relieved tell him that the captain had thrown his dog overboard. The fresh man, however, did not appear to make much of it; he was sleepy, hot, and irritable, and he growled out, "Ay, an' a good job too for the dog. He'd better be drowned than kep' at sea all his life." The truth was, the seaman who had witnessed the captain's action was unable to convey the impression it had left. All he could say was, that the skipper had flung his dog overboard, but he could not submit the scene to the other in such a way as to make him see the madness in it. He would tell the same story in the same way when he went forward, and probably all the men would think was that the skipper had a right to drown his

dog if it pleased him; and there was nothing strange in his choosing to drown it at night, only he might as well have hitched something heavy round the poor brute's neck first. Whether they would make anything of the captain's threat to follow his dog I could not foresee; sailors mostly laugh at talk of that kind, and only remember what was said after a man has executed his threat.

Mr. Thomas yawned loudly as he came on deck; he said he had only had half an hour's sleep during his watch below; it was too hot to sleep, he said; it was worse than lying in the Hooghley, only there were no mosquitoes. However, I soon woke him up.

In the first place I told him that the skipper had thrown his dog overboard, and his exclamation to me when he did so; and then I told him about the offer of marriage to Nelly.

"There, now!" he exclaimed. "What did I tell you the other day? You wouldn't believe me."

"Well, Mr. Thomas," said I, "you were right; but if that were the worst part of my story I shouldn't have said anything about it. I believe that the time has come for us to make up our minds very seriously as to what course we are to adopt with regard to Captain Flanders. My conviction is that he is dangerously mad, and that the ship is in peril so long as he commands her."

I then gave him the whole substance of the captain's conversation with me, all that he had said about the chief mate, how he had made me feel the revolver in his breast, and how he had ordered me to tell Mr. Thomas that he was prepared for him. The little man was thunderstruck. He kept on exclaiming, "Is

it possible he can believe I want to murder him?" as though he could not master the meaning of his own words.

"What a frightful position to find oneself in!" he cried. "Good God! under the persuasion that I am thirsting for his blood he may take it into his head to draw his revolver upon me!"

"You will have to watch him very closely," said I. "I do, whenever he speaks to me."

"What shall we do, Lee?" he exclaimed. "It won't do to let him murder us."

"No, certainly not," I answered, "although his throwing his dog overboard looks uncommonly like business, sir. But what are we to do?" and here I enumerated all the difficulties I foresaw in the way of our confining him.

Thomas knew our profession thoroughly, and grasped all my objections at once. He shook his head as he muttered, "True, true, every word! Lord, what a position!" and looked about the poop as if he expected to see the skipper lurking among the darker shadows.

"I see nothing for it," said I, "except to wait a bit in the hope that the crew and passengers will discover the truth for themselves. We *must* provide ourselves with witnesses able to prove that the man was mad enough to justify us in securing him before we lay——"

"Ay!" he interrupted eagerly; "but *you* can prove that he has as good as threatened to shoot me, that he carried a loaded pistol in his pocket, and that I went about in fear of my life!"

"I could swear to that, it is true," I replied; "but

swearing and proving are two different things. Or view it thus. Suppose we resolve to confine Captain Flanders to his cabin, to secure him in such a way as to prevent him doing any mischief; it would not do for you and me to lay hands upon him—we should have to go to work in a formal way; we should require the assistance of the men. Suppose the men refused? But worse still—suppose they consented, came aft, were harangued by the captain and persuaded by him that we were a couple of mutineers, and that this was the first step in a play that would end in transporting them all for life if they meddled any further in it, and then, having convinced them not only that he was not mad but that we were a couple of pirates, he ordered them to clap us in irons? Eh, Mr. Thomas! What think you of that picture, sir? Does it sound so very improbable? For my part, I believe that this is just the very identical thing that would happen if we went to work incautiously. Madness is always full of cunning, and I bet that if the skipper chose he could act and talk for hours together so rationally, so genially, with such a well-bred air—hear Miss Maitland speak of him!—that whoever listened should swear he was as fine and sensible a man as any living, and that you and I *must* be mutineers to entertain so atrocious a scheme as that of locking him up in his cabin!”

All this was as true as gospel, and Mr. Thomas was obliged to own it was.

“Why, in Heaven’s name, does he fasten upon *me*?” he cried. “Do I look like an assassin? But he has been storing up his rage ever since we got under weigh. He has mortified me, he has affronted me, done everything he could to show how much he dis-

likes me, and now he means to make me out a murderer in heart if not in deed! A pretty mess, by George!"

"If he should fire at you, Mr. Thomas—"

"Fire at me!" he shouted. "For God's sake don't talk in that way, Mr. Lee! Fire at me! Why, if he should fire at me, do you know he might kill me, sir? How many balls do you think it takes to kill a man?"

"What I meant to say was, that if he should attempt any violence, we should have an excuse for locking him up."

"Oh, hang that kind of excuses; I'd rather be spared them," he growled. "Why, what a position for a man to be in—watched by a lunatic with a pocketful of powder and shot! At this rate, my life's not worth an hour's purchase. I'm no coward, Mr. Lee, and I shouldn't wait for a chair to stand on to pluck the tallest man living by the beard who called me a coward; but, by George! it would have made Nelson himself sweat to feel that he was being watched by a madman with a revolver in his bosom, and that at any moment a shot might come crashing through his cranium."

"I don't think we need fear that," said I. "He is quite as much afraid of you as you can be of him; and with all deference, sir, I think your place will be to keep forward, at this end of the poop, as much as possible, and take care never to let him catch you looking at him, for that seems to have worried him more than anything else."

"I hope he won't come on deck this watch," said he. "However, you go below, Mr. Lee, and turn in. We can do no more good by talking, and if he should

take it into his head to come up and have a look at me, he had best find me alone. A man can die but once, and if I am to be despatched by a madman's pistol, why, there's an end; it's forewritten, Lee. A bullet kills more quickly than drowning, and either death is better than hanging."

I never before realized how closely comedy and tragedy lie side by side, until I caught myself laughing in my cabin over the image of little Thomas looking up and down the deck, starting at every sound, and shaping every shadow into the figure of Captain Flanders, in the act of levelling his revolver. However, laugh as I might, the matter was anything but a joke, and must be ended somehow and immediately, for it would be impossible for the chief mate to go on living in a constant state of fear; and even as it was, the four hours he would have to pass on deck before I relieved him, the night so dark that it was only because the sails blotted out the stars that their outlines were visible, no one at hand but the man at the wheel to come to his help, whilst at any moment he might turn and find the captain at his elbow; I say, even this middle watch that he was now keeping was full enough of anxiety to turn a man's hair grey. However, if the captain meant to shoot him, my being on deck would not stop the ball from hitting him; and so, after lying awake for an hour, listening to the froth spitting and hissing under the open port-hole, and the tread of the mate's boots as he passed along the deck over my head, I fell asleep.

I had slept for an hour and a half, when I was awaked by the sound of water splashing in the cabin, and starting up, I found that the freshening breeze

was now and again hoisting a little sea clean into the port-hole, and after filling a pair of half-Wellington boots, had washed them off the chest and carried them away to leeward. I jumped out of my bunk and closed the port, and having poured the water out of my boots, was about to turn in, when I heard the captain hail the fore-castle, just over my head. I listened. Presently one or two men came along to the quarter-deck. The captain again sung out, and the men went up the poop-ladder and walked right aft.

I thought it strange that the captain should be at the break of the poop giving orders, if the mate was on deck, and wondered if Mr. Thomas had gone forward, and if so, what errand had carried him there. I put my eye to the port-hole to see to what extent the wind had freshened, and how the weather looked; but it was very dark outside, and I could only make out here and there a star shooting past the thick glass as the vessel rolled.

I once more lay down and closed my eyes, and was dozing with all my senses abroad, when again I was aroused by hearing voices on the quarter-deck, and soon after Mr. Thomas's cabin door was opened and closed, and the key turned and withdrawn. As his cabin was right opposite mine, these sounds were very distinct. I knew I could not be mistaken; I never remember Mr. Thomas locking his cabin door before, and the withdrawal of the key was remarkable. I lay listening and wondering. Presently somebody rapped on the door of my cabin.

"Who's there?" I called.

"Are you awake, Mr. Lee, sir?" responded some

one, in a voice that was intended for a whisper, but that sounded uncommonly like the snore of a lion.

"Is that you, Sinnet?"

"Yes, sir. May I open the door? Here's a regular start outside."

"Come in," I answered, sitting erect in the bunk and groping about for a box of matches on a shelf over my head, which I presently found, and lighted the swinging lamp against the bulkhead. By the time I had got the lamp alight Sinnet had closed the door and stood up against it, with his big whiskers, red face, loose duck trousers, and naked chest, looking like a nautical sign over a public-house.

"What is it?" said I, staring at him as he turned his quid and squinted around the deck for some place to spit on.

"Why, sir," he replied, "the capt'n's just called me aft to lock Mr. Thomas up in his cabin. When I gets upon the poop, there stan's the capt'n holding a revolver in his hand, and he points like fury aft to where Mr. Thomas wur stan'ing, close agin the wheel, an' he sings out, 'The chief mate of this ship wants to take my life, bo'sun. D'ye see him there? Secure him at once and lock him up in his cabin, an' if he struggles, make his legs fast, d'ye hear?' And then he makes a little run aft and points his pistol as if he meant to shoot; arter which he heaves to and says to me, 'What are you a-waitin' for? Bear a hand! bear a hand!' and he activally catches hold o' my arm, sir—ay, as true as I'm stan'in' here, he do—and he runs me up to Mr. Thomas and then up helm, and away he scuds forrards as far as the quarter-boat, singing out,

‘Quick! quick! I’ll teach him who’s master here! I’ll let him see what mutineering’s like!’”

By this time I was out of bed dressing myself, but so great was my excitement that I hauled on my trousers stern foremost, which, giving my legs no play, tumbled me down on the deck; nor could I rise until the boatswain had rid me of my small-clothes. I cursed my stupidity, for I had sprained my ankle. “But fire away, Sinnet. What happened after?”

“Why, sir, I went up to Mr. Thomas and says, ‘You hear what the capt’n says, sir?’ and he answers, ‘Thank God! Carry me anywheres out o’ reach o’ that blasted reolver;’ an’ he made me go along with him to leeward, all the way holding up his hand and crouching his head behind it, like; and he’s now in his cabin, and here’s the key of it.”

“Who’s keeping watch?”

“Why, the capt’n, sir.”

“Is he very much excited?”

“Not in the least now, sir. When I reported the chief mate in his cabin, he said quite pleasantly, ‘Thank ye, bo’sun; that’s a load off my mind.’ But by the way the chief mate went along wi’ me, I can’t help thinkin’, sir, it’s more a load off *his* mind than t’other’s. I can’t make out how it’s all come about, Mr. Lee. I never see any man less wicious-looking than Mr. Thomas. *I*’ve always found him straight, and right up to his work, and the men in his watch swear by him. Of course it’s my dooty to do what I’m told, but sure-ly Captain Flanders is mistaken in Mr. Thomas—leastways, it’s all keel up’ards to me. However, there he is, sir,” said the worthy fellow,

pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, "an' I thought it right to let you know what's happened."

Something in the expression of his face induced me to exclaim, "I see you have guessed the truth, Sinnet, or at all events you are very near it. It's a bad job, but I've known it for a good while, and have only wondered where the deuce all your eyes were not to have seen it sooner. I should have thought Lanyon's funeral would set the men wondering."

"Ay, sir, but it was queerer than we found it. Lookin' back, I can see it *was* a rummy business, but there was nary man forrards as could swear it wasn't all ship-shape, unless it wur Chips, and he's but a ignorant man too, though he pretends to know more than most men."

"Have you seen Miller since he left the wheel?" I asked, Miller being the man who was at the wheel when the captain threw his dog overboard.

"No, sir; but at eight bells when he came forrard he stood agin my door telling his yarn about the drownding of the dog to one of the men—Jim Cooper I think the man was. I heard every word."

"Surely, bo'sun, that yarn ought to have prepared you for anything that might happen; I mean that, having heard that story, you couldn't feel much astonished when you found the captain on the poop with a revolver in his hand, singing out to you to seize Mr. Thomas?"

"Well, you see, it's like this, Mr. Lee," he answered. "If the captain hadn't sung out to his dog that he was going to follow him soon, I don't know as I *should* have found anything werry striking in Miller's story. But when I heard Miller say that the

capt'n talked to the dog arter it was in the water, I begun to see something fishy in the whole job."

The skipper's boots creaking overhead warned me not to prolong the conversation. "Sinnet," said I, "you had better say nothing to the men about the captain's being——" I did not like to say *mad*, so I touched my forehead, and the boatswain nodded about thirty times, so anxious was he to let me see he understood me. "We must take an opportunity to talk the matter over, and think what is best to be done. One thing is clear—he must be watched. Don't suppose I think him worse than he is; but after what I have seen and heard, Sinnet, I believe that, if we value our lives, and desire to see the *Waldershare* kept out of peril, we must watch him. He has confined the chief mate to his cabin, and so I suppose he means to keep watch and watch with me. We must let him think that he is keeping watch, but in reality, bo'sun, it will be for you and me to keep watch and watch. Do you follow me? You're not to come aft and walk the deck when I'm below, but you'll have to turn out and dress yourself, and keep your eye on the weather, and see all clear, and be ready to take the command out of his hands if you find him going wrong."

"I see, sir. He'll never guess that I'm keeping his look-out."

"Just so. You had better go forward now. I should not like him to find us talking here in my cabin. One delusion breeds another, Sinnet, and he may be ordering me under arrest next, which mustn't happen; for if I'm stowed away, who the deuce is going to check his navigation? But mind you don't get talking to the men. If they speak to you about

Mr. Thomas, just say that it's your duty to obey orders and to ask no questions, and that you have no notion what the rights or wrongs of the matter are; let the crew think what they like. The truth will come upon them soon enough, I believe, and you and I must take care that when it comes it shan't hurt anybody. That'll do, Sinnet. You can go forward; but keep a bright look-out until I go on deck to relieve the captain."

I was now dressed and sitting up in my bunk, with my legs dangling over the edge. Sleep was gone out of my eyes. I was greatly worried and anxious, although my mind was much relieved by the boatswain having found out the truth without any hints from me, and by the arrangement I had made with him.

My reason in ordering the boatswain not to speak to the men was, I wanted the crew to see for themselves that the captain was mad; they would then be all at my back. I could do as I pleased without fear of consequences, and it would be my duty to secure the skipper and release Mr. Thomas, that he might take command of the ship. But it was determined not to move in the matter until the crew came into my way of thinking, and asked me to act; and how long it would take them to find out the truth was more than I should have cared to predict, for of what value was the penetration of men who, taking the boatswain as their mouthpiece, found that the only odd feature in the incident of the drowned dog was the captain talking to him "arter he was in the water"?

Dropping from my bunk presently, I opened the cabin door and looked into the cuddy. A single dim

lamp was slung just abaft the mizzen-mast, and all the fore part where I stood was in shadow. Out on the quarter-deck it looked pitch dark. I heard the captain pacing the deck from the quarter-boat to the wheel and back again, with the regular swing of a pendulum. The bulk-heads and timbers creaked a bit as the vessel rolled, but the water was smooth, there was a fine breeze, the ship, under a cloud of canvas, was going through it steadily and silently enough, as if her progress were made on the soft bed of froth she heaped around her. I crossed the deck and knocked lightly on Thomas's door. He had probably been expecting me; any way, he knew who it was, for he replied, "All right, Lee," and then came to the door.

"The bo'sun has told me all about it," said I. "I don't think you need worry yourself, Mr. Thomas. It can't last. There will be a regular flare-up of some kind or other, and then the crew will take the matter in hand."

"What does the bo'sun think, Lee?"

"Why, sir, he thinks the captain mad."

"Good. I don't regret this. The thought of that man watching me with a pistol in his bosom was growing unbearable. Anyhow, I'm safe here; only, for God's sake, keep a smart look-out and see that he don't run away with the ship. If a ghost should tell him to wreck the *Waldershare*, he might plump us into Saint Paul."

I explained the arrangement I had made with the boatswain.

"Ay," he exclaimed, "that will do. I shall be able to sleep now. It was too awful to think of this

ship and nobody keeping watch but a madman. I say!"

"What, sir?"

"Take care that he don't starve me. He may try to come the bread-and-water dodge. I'm not a giant, Lee, but I want nourishing as much as any man. I commit my body to your love, Lee; for God's sake, my dear, see that I'm used well."

"I'll take care of you if I have to plunder the pantry," I answered. "Good night!" And I returned to my cabin, glad to have found him so easy under restraint. After sitting thinking awhile in my bunk, I put my head upon the pillow and fell asleep, and never awoke until I heard some one beating on my door. "Hillo!" I sung out.

"It's eight bells, Mr. Lee; your watch on deck, sir!" exclaimed the captain in his deep voice. Being dressed, I was on deck in a few moments, and as I made my way up the poop-ladder, I resolved not to appear to know what had happened in the watch just ended. The dawn was broad in the east, just frosting the wave-tips under it, though the horizon made a line as black as ink, and all in the west the night-shadow was dense, and the stars few and faint. The wind was fresh and sweeping, very steady but well forward; there was little or no sea, only now and again the lift of a swell, and a leap of dark water against our weather beam; the ship was under the same canvas I had left on her, and was *swooshing* pleasantly through it, her spars erect like the cocked ears of a race-horse, and her decks all breezy with the wind.

The skipper was looking at the compass when I gained the poop, but on catching sight of me he came

forward. His face, pallid at all times, looked uncommonly ghastly in the growing light, and his eyes appeared to have sunk a foot in his head since I had seen him last.

"I dare say you are surprised not to see the chief mate on deck, aren't you?" said he, gazing at me very narrowly and with a great frown. I pretended to be struck by the circumstance, and looked around me, exclaiming, "I don't see him, sir."

"No, sir, and you'll see him no more," said he, with so serious and impressive a voice, that had I not known what *had* become of Thomas I should have thought he was dead.

"I explained to you last evening, Mr. Lee," he continued, "what the intentions of that man were. My life is precious to me, and it was monstrous that I, the captain of the *Waldershare*, should be haunted day and night by the conviction that my chief officer only waited for a fitting opportunity to murder me. No one," he exclaimed, in a trembling voice, "would believe the agony of mind this man has caused me. Over and over again when I have been lying awake he has crept into my cabin and looked at me, and seeing my eyes wide open has crept away again, whilst I have been powerless to move until he was gone; and then I have started up with the sweat pouring from my face, wondering with awe and devotion that Almighty God should always be pleased to keep me waking during the visits of this miscreant."

He lifted his hat with a shaking hand, evidently with the intention of wiping his forehead, but forgot his purpose and replaced his hat, and I saw two tears roll down his hollow cheeks. He gave me the idea of

a man who had grown old and white and imbecile in a night. I never beheld a more moving figure, nor could imagine a more affecting expression of face.

"May I ask what has become of the chief mate, sir?"

"He is locked up in his cabin, and there," he suddenly burst forth in a furious manner, "I intend he shall remain until I get him to Callao. It will be *my* turn then!" I held my peace. "You see how it is, Mr. Lee: to prevent him taking my life, I have locked him up in his cabin. Now I shall hope to get some rest, and be rid of this thing that frets my chest as though it were the blade of a knife boring me," laying his hand on the pistol under his coat. "You and I will stand the watches for the rest of the voyage out."

"Very good, sir."

"The course is S.S.W. She is a point and a half off—let her go full."

"Ay, ay, sir."

He then went away to his cabin. As I paced the deck I felt a real culprit. His tears and the glimpse he had enabled me to catch of his mental sufferings appealed to me forcibly. I felt the strength of his claim upon me for protection against himself; and yet I durst not act. A sort of divinity hedges the captain of a ship at sea, as we are told it does a king ashore. Ay, you may laugh, my fine fellow, but let me tell you that in the eyes of a true sailor his captain has a kind of sanctity; he is boss, head man; one part of the deck is reserved for him; he comes and goes as he pleases; exacts absolute obedience, and over his little kingdom has more despotic powers vested in him than any other kind of monarch dare exercise or dreams of possessing.

Hence every professional instinct in me shrank when I thought of seizing Captain Flanders and locking him up, even whilst I felt that by doing so I should be acting as much for his own as for the sake of every person aboard; and this reluctance was altogether independent of the reasons I have already given which determined me to remain inactive a while.

The sun brought promise of a fine day; it soared into a sky full of high delicate clouds, shot with varicoloured lustre like the pearly inside of an oyster-shell; the sea was all ablaze in his light, and now and again a squadron of flying-fish darted from the side of a sea and buried themselves in some distant green ridge, like a flight of silver arrows shot out of the deep and falling back again. Presently signs of life began to show about the ship; the cook came out of the forecastle, yawning with his arms stretched out, opened the galley door and lighted the fire; then the steward emerged from the cuddy and went forward; then the butcher made his appearance and busied himself under the long-boat. Anon the boatswain's mate piped the watch to wash down the decks, and out from all sorts of places emerged a number of sleepy, grumbling men, their trousers tucked above their knees, and their arms bare; the head pump was rigged, buckets and scrubbing-brushes passed along, and soon the lee scruppers were discharging dirty streams of water as the buckets were whisked along the decks and the scrubbing brushes went scraping over the hard planks.

Whilst this work was doing, I noticed the boatswain, who was standing near the galley, look intently aft, and suddenly his mate, who plied the buckets

which were passed to him from forward, broke off for a moment to speak to him, and they both looked aft. I thought nothing of this, and took a turn; but when I returned I found most of the men looking in the direction in which the boatswain had fixed his eyes. When they saw me they fell to again, and the boatswain came and stood under the poop.

"I should like to say a word to you, sir," said he.

"Step up, Sinnet: what is it?"

"Why, sir, as I was looking this way just now, I see the skipper come to the cuddy window with a regular run, as if some one was arter him, an' shake his fist at us, and then he ran back; presently up he comes agin, and this time he makes a terribly ugly face, to be sure, and likewise holds his fist up, just as if some one was *sarcing* him and he was sayin', 'If ye do that again I'll knock you down!' Then back he flies, and I thought he was gone for good; but not he! He comes once more and flattens his face agin the window and stares like that, and then he goes away. See, sir! look at them fellows staring! I'll bet my life he's there agin, watchin' 'em."

Indeed, the men were all looking towards the cuddy and speaking, one to another, in low voices. Telling Sinnet to remain where he was, I went on to the quarter-deck. The poop, as most people who have any knowledge at all of ships are aware, is a raised after-deck, the front of which overlooks the main-deck. The front of the *Waldershare's* poop consisted of three windows, on either side a central door; these windows furnished light to the fore part of the cuddy, or saloon as it is sometimes called, the skylights illumining the part abaft the mizzen-mast. The break of the poop

overhung these windows by about five feet, and as Mr. Thomas's cabin and mine projected to that extent beyond the line of the other cabins, a recess was left between them that was very useful in dirty weather as a well-sheltered nook for a yarn or a smoke.

The first object my eye encountered when I reached the quarter-deck was the face of Captain Flanders framed by the window next to my cabin. It was as white as a sheet, and as he wore no hat, his egg-shaped head presented a most extraordinary appearance, nothing of him being visible below his chin. It was, indeed, a face to scare any man who did not know the condition of the brains inside it, and I was not at all surprised that the men could do no work for watching it. The moment he saw me his features grew convulsed, with an expression that was as much like a laugh as a frown; he raised his hand and beckoned to me with a gesture full of wild eagerness. I immediately entered the cuddy.

"Hush!" he exclaimed, putting his finger to his lips. "Come aft."

He led me to the door of his cabin, and I thought he would take me into it; but he stopped short.

"Why do all the men stare?" he asked. "What do they mean? Is the chief mate among them?"

"No, sir. The chief mate is in his cabin, locked up."

"Why do they stare, then?" he exclaimed, angrily. "What are their intentions? Have they mutinied?"

"No, sir."

"I don't trust them. Have they no design upon my life? Will you swear?"

"I will swear with pleasure. Your life is as safe as mine, so far as they are concerned."

"How can you believe it?" he cried, scornfully. "Do you not see the devilish expression in their faces? Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, cowering and holding his hands to his head, "where can I go to be safe? Who will keep them out of the cuddy if they determine to enter it?"

"I'll take care that they don't come here," I answered; and I opened his cabin door, and he sneaked in, trembling all over; and the moment I closed it outside he locked it inside.

I hoped now he would go to bed and keep quiet. I doubt if he had shut his eyes in sleep that night, for he was on deck during the first watch, had kept much of the middle watch himself, and now, in the morning watch, he was still awake. The men looked very hard at me as I came out of the cuddy; they all of them knew by this time that something was amiss with the captain, and, indeed, there seemed a disposition to skulk and yarn: the captain had gone wrong and the chief mate was locked up, and they fancied some advantages should come to them out of these things. But Sinnet was the man to "work up their old iron" without bullying them. The moment he noticed their laxity, he was among them, showing one fellow this way, tumbling another yonder, grasping a bucket of water and swooshing it along so that it ran up the legs of the men who stood near and set them capering, wresting a scrubbing-brush from one man and scrubbing furiously to show how it ought to be done, running another forward by the scruff of his neck to show him where some dirt lay, shouting out in his

hurricane-note, "Scrub and hang yourselves, bullies! Now then, you sogers * forward there, keep that pump working—d'ye hear? are you afraid of the sea running short!" until the whole watch were in motion again and the scuppers gushing briskly.

I drew him aside when he had got the men to work and told him that the captain was afraid the men would rise, and that he was under the impression that Mr. Thomas was among them. "He is getting worse and worse," I exclaimed. "I wish I knew what my duty was in a job of this kind; for to go on in this way is ruinous to a man's nerves."

"D'ye think there's any foundation for the capt'n's suspicion of the chief officer, Mr. Lee?" asked the boatswain.

"Lord love you, man, no! Why, are *you* going mad to ask such questions?"

"Then he ought to be let out—that's why I axed the question, sir."

"No; you can't let him out without the captain's orders."

"Any way, here's the key of the chief mate's door; perhaps you'll take it, sir. It's of no use to me."

I put the key in my pocket and said it would be best to let the day pass without doing anything, to see what was going to happen. "If he's much on deck the men will notice him, and as their suspicion is already excited, I dare say they will watch him pretty curiously. Towards the close of the day you may go among them and endeavour to find out their views. If

* Soldiers. The most contemptuous term you can apply to a sailor.

they are agreed that he is mad—and there never was a madder man in this world, Sinnet, that you may take my word for—then you had better call a council, point out that the ship can't be left in charge of a lunatic——”

“Of a what, sir?” asked the boatswain, following me attentively.

“Of a madman, I say. Tell them, that as he has locked up one mate, he may take a fancy to lock up the other, in which case nobody would know where he was navigating the ship to, nor be able to form any idea of what he meant to do with her; so that the only way to end the trouble would be for some of the oldest seamen out of each watch to lay aft, headed by you, and request me in the name of the ship's company to take measures to provide for the vessel's security. This would strengthen my hands and enable me to go to work without fear of the consequences, should the captain grow well and get me among the lawyers ashore. The liberty of a shipmaster is a delicate thing for his mate to meddle with, and unless I'm supported by the whole of the crew I'll not move in the business.”

“I see exactly what you mean, sir, and it's the proper thing to do,” answered the boatswain. “I know how to talk to the men to find out their minds; and I rather fancy old Sam Roband has been in a like quandary, for I heerd him once yarning to some of the men about a skipper as he sailed with that went cranky, and took the ship's cook to be his mother, and never would give no orders without fust singing out for his mother to lay aft and tell him if he was doing right.”

The decks having been washed down and swabbed, were soon dry, the wind blew warm and fresh, and having veered a trifle to the westwards, had let the ship come to her course again, and so we might hope to cross the Line next day. The ship being jammed in the wind, was not doing more than five knots, though the same wind free would have driven her nine or ten. The sea was all a-tumble with the breeze, and yet smooth—that is, we went along it smoothly, the waves not being strong enough to lift and drop us; and the water was of an exquisite transparent green, with heads of froth glancing and vanishing on it, and in the east it was of a brilliant tremble, too dazzling to look at, with the shining of the sun upon it; it was a morning to make the mere feeling of being alive a delight. Not only was the air like a powerful cordial, but it was impossible to look abroad upon the sea and at the ship, with her delicate topmost canvas matching the high pearl-coloured morning clouds, and her masts shining and her shrouds throwing bars of shadow upon the sand-white deck, and the foot-cloths of the lower sails, without a kind of transport. It was well for me to feel this sudden glow of pleasure, for undoubtedly I had passed a night of real anxiety, and still wanted all the heart I could get. The ship was indeed, as things stood, in no immediate peril; but it was difficult to know what was going to happen whilst the captain remained at large. It was all very well for the boatswain to say that he knew how to talk to the men so as to get them to come aft to me about the captain; but I believed that when they came to discuss his conduct they would not be able to satisfy

themselves that he was so bad as the boatswain might endeavour to make out. In short, my whole fear was that the crew would not be brought to think the skipper dangerously mad until he had done something to satisfy them that he *was* mad, and, as I have before written, what he should do to convince the men that he was a lunatic might cause the loss of the ship. How could this happen, do you ask? Well, there were several ways; but the one I most dreaded was his ordering me into arrest, his persuading the ship's company that Mr. Thomas and I were both in a conspiracy against him, his taking sole command of the ship and nobody knowing where he was steering her.

A little after seven o'clock Mr. Black came on deck and went forward to get a bath, which he obtained by giving one of the boys a trifle to pump on him. Next to jumping overboard there is no better bath to be had at sea than this, in warm weather. The water comes up cool and green and sparkling from under the bows, and the warm wind blowing under the jibs and stay-sail dries you without help of a towel. After his bath the Scotchman arrived on the poop for a little exercise. My mind being full of Captain Flanders, I resolved, when I saw Mr. Black come along the deck, to see what sort of a notion he had formed of the skipper.

"Good morning, Mr. Black; I hope you enjoyed your bath, sir?"

"Axcellent, axcellent, thank you, Mr. Lee. There's nothing moor refrashing than salt water befoor brockfast; it clears the skeen of all the humours which gather during the nicht, and creates a soort of vacuum in the

stomach that is vary conducive to good speerits when you know there's a hearty meal waiting you."

"Have you seen Captain Flanders this morning, Mr. Black?"

"No, sir, I haven't."

"I suppose you know that Mr. Thomas is under arrest in his cabin?"

"Eh? What's that?" said he, staring in his slow way.

I repeated my remark, and added that the chief mate was suspected by the captain of wishing to murder him. I put the case bluntly for reasons of my own, and watched the effect of my words. It took Mr. Black some moments to comprehend what I said, and then he turned pale. I was nearly laughing in his face, for as his pallor indicated the moment when he mastered my meaning, the time occupied by his mind in digesting my words was ludicrously apparent.

"Surely, Mr. Lee, that's a vary serious accusation to make against a man," said he.

"I can't imagine a worse one, Mr. Black," I answered. "But you know Mr. Thomas as well as I do, and I should like to ask if you think he's capable of so atrocious a crime as murder?"

"Why, sir," says he after a long pause, "a quasion of that kind requires mature conseederation befoor it's answered. In the mean time I cannot but say, that whether Mr. Thomas is capable of murdering anybody or not, I'm glad to hear that he's under arrest."

"But, my dear sir, if Mr. Thomas is innocent of any such intention is it not very hard upon him that he should be locked up in his cabin?"

"Well, sir, Captain Flanders probably knows what he's about; and having regard to the safety of his passengers and the sheep that he commands, I think he has acted judeeciously in confining Mr. Thomas on suspicion of a crime which, should it happen, might imperil all our lives."

I was staggered by the obtuseness of the man, for I honestly believed that he had witnessed enough eccentricity in the captain to justify him in putting something approaching a right construction on the arrest of the chief mate. However, it made me see how wise I was in not attempting to deal with the skipper on my own responsibility.

Mr. Black's alarm increased by degrees. I don't think, even when he turned pale, that he had fully mastered the formidable reason I had assigned for Mr. Thomas's confinement.

"Can it be possible," he exclaimed, "that Mr. Thomas washes to murder the captain? Why, if that's so, it's the captain's duty to mak' for the nearest poort. I could not have believed such a thing. Ma certes! Murder the captain! What will the crew think?" and he asked me at what hour the mate's intentions were first discovered, and what was the motive, and how he proposed to execute his dreadful threat, and if it was known that others were concerned, and, in short, the fool treated the whole thing as if it had been a stark, fearful reality.

Seeing how deplorably literal he was, I resolved to give him no hint of the skipper's insanity, for I believed him just the man to go below and repeat my conversation to Captain Flanders, and then no doubt what I dreaded would come to pass—I should be

locked up too. At last he cried out that he must go and see the captain on the subject at once; the idea of there being anybody aboard capable of so blood-thirsty an intention as that of killing the captain made him feel terribly uncomfortable, and down he went.

However, when I came to reflect a bit, I considered after all that the man showed no extraordinary degree of stupidity in not having detected the captain's insanity; the pranks which had carried most significance to my mind had been exhibited almost exclusively before me and Nelly. To enable Mr. Black to form a decided opinion he should have attended Lanyon's burial, witnessed the skipper throw his dog overboard, listened to his conversation with me about Mr. Thomas, have heard him talk about religion and spirits, etc. Still I could not help thinking there had been enough manifestations of insanity in the captain's behaviour to have aroused Mr. Black's and the other passengers' suspicions, and the Scotchman's ignorance of the captain being wrong in his mind only convinced me that it is possible to live for some weeks in the society of a madman and yet have no idea that he is mad.

The hull of a brig that had been made out steering athwart our hawse had now hove in sight. She was the clumsiest tub I had ever seen afloat, like a fifty-year-old north-country collier, with a run like a butter-box, a high stern sawn off, and bows resembling an apple. She flew Spanish colours, and was, perhaps, from Pernambuco, bound to Sierra Leone. She tumbled over the water like a buoy in tow; her studding-sails full of eyes, her old boom foresail slatting, and the sea slopping round her as though she had been a porpoise

under canvas. Yet the ocean made her very ugliness picturesque. I called a hand aft to hoist away the small ensign to let her see what countryman we were, and at that moment eight bells were struck and a boatswain's pipe shrilled forwards.

As it was to be watch and watch with me and the captain, I went below to call him, and going to his door, I knocked, but got no answer. I knocked once more, but again receiving no answer, I tried the handle of the door, but found that the key was turned, as, indeed, I now remembered he had turned it when he had gone to his cabin. Whether he was asleep, or in a trance, or what he was doing, I could not conceive, but I supposed he was asleep, and in a very deep sleep too, as he had taken no rest that night, and I went away and stood upon the quarter-deck to consider what I should do.

Seeing Sinnet forward I hailed him, and told him I had knocked twice on the captain's door and got no answer, and that the door was locked.

"Shall I stand his watch until he comes on deck?" he asked.

"But the men will think that queer," I replied.

"Ay, and so much the better," said he, "for I want to set 'em whispering; and by-and-by they'll be asking me questions, and that'll help me to bring 'em aft as we arranged, sir."

"Very well," said I. "Get you on to the poop while I shift my clothes, and then I'll send the steward aft. The captain will have to come to breakfast, any way. If he's sleeping, let him lie; if ever brain wanted rest, his does."

On this Sinnet left me, and I repaired to my cabin,

where I changed my clothes and freshened myself up with cold water, and then went into the cuddy again. The steward was preparing the table for breakfast. I stepped up to Mr. Black's door and knocked. He came out.

"Pray," said I, "did you see the captain just now? I understood you to say you were coming below to speak to him."

"The steward told me he was in his cabin and asleep," he replied. "But I mean to speak to him, sir. What you told me has vary conseederably agitated me, Mr. Lee. You did not tell me where Mr. Thomas was confined."

"Why, in his cabin yonder."

"What!" he shouted, "among the passengers! Eh, but that's too bad. I shall certainly protest against that, sir!" And he drew in his head and closed the door.

"That reminds me, steward, to tell you to have the chief mate's breakfast at the usual hour," said I. "I have the key in my pocket, and when you are ready report to me."

"Yes, sir."

"Just step aft, and see if you can arouse the captain. He is supposed to be keeping watch and watch with me; and though I would rather he should take his rest, he may be annoyed if we let him sleep on. Don't make too much row."

He went to the captain's door and knocked several times, tapping lightly at first, and then handling his knuckles smartly. He got no answer, and I began to feel alarmed. Mad as he might be, the captain would still have the instincts of a seaman, and must awaken

to a lighter summons than mine or the steward's if he had ears to hear it.

"I can't get any answer, sir," said the steward, coming back to me. "It's very strange, isn't it? He's not used to sleep like this, sir."

"I neither understand it nor like it," I replied.

At this moment Mr. Black came out of his cabin, and in a few seconds after Nelly's door opened. She, quick as lightning, saw by my face that something was wrong, and came round to me.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in a low voice.

"The captain's cabin door is locked, and we cannot get him to answer us," I replied, in my usual voice; and I let her see by a sign that I wanted Mr. Black to hear my answer as well as she. Her face grew concerned in an instant, and she glanced at me with her eyes full of pained inquiry.

"Have you knocked, Mr. Lee?" asked Mr. Black, catching the dismay that was strong in me and Nelly, and that was evidently growing in the steward.

Before I could answer, the Espinosas' door opened and out came the Spaniard, followed by his wife; so here was now the cuddy half-full of people; at the same time, happening to glance forward, I saw some of the men in the waist of the ship staring aft, clearly surprised at seeing the boatswain keeping watch.

"I have knocked, and so has the steward," said I, answering Mr. Black's question.

"What is it? What is it?" cried the Spaniard, in his quick way, looking into everybody's face, it seemed to me, all at once.

Now, this was too much, and to have all these

people boring me with questions at a juncture of this kind was more than I could endure.

"Mr. Espinosa," said I, politely but firmly, "you will greatly oblige me by escorting Madam Espinosa on deck. Miss Maitland (here I gave her a look), will you please allow Mr. Black to conduct you on to the poop? My position just now is a difficult one, and I wish to be free to deal with it in the way that may be most conducive to our general security."

Mr. Black was about to speak, but Nelly walked up to him, put her arm through his, and, in a manner, helped him along to the companion steps; and the Espinosas followed with wondering faces, the Spaniard darting fierce whispers to his wife as they went.

When they were gone, I said to the steward, "I suppose you know that the chief officer is under arrest?"

"I have heard about it, sir."

"Have they told you why he is locked up?"

"Yes, sir—for threatening the captain's life."

"Well, that's a delusion—a lie. You have waited on the captain at this table; do you think he is in a fit state of mind to command this ship?"

"Why, sir, you ask me a plain question, and I'll answer it straight. I've all along thought him a queer gentleman; but you make me put two and two together, and taking what I've seen with my own eyes and what I've heard tell of his doings, such as chucking his dog overboard, and locking up Mr. Thomas, and making faces at the men, I don't believe he's fully sensible." Here he sunk his voice, with a look in the direction of the captain's cabin.

Upon this, I made up my mind to act decisively; so once more stepping aft, I beat heavily on the cabin

door, at the same time rattling the handle. "Captain Flanders!" I shouted. No answer was returned. I went on to the poop, where I found the boatswain walking to and fro, watched by the Espinosas and Mr. Black, who stood together. By the alarm on the Spaniard's face, it was plain that Mr. Black had told him about Mr. Thomas, and no doubt exaggerated the facts I had given him. Nelly stood alone to leeward, looking at the passing water.

"Bo'sun!" I exclaimed, "go forward and send all the hands aft;" and I stationed myself at the rail and waited.

In a few minutes the crew came rolling on to the quarter-deck. They were brimful of eagerness and curiosity, and stood in a crowd all about the capstan, every man's eyes bent on me; and a queerer lot of faces I never looked at. They were as silent as death, and before I spoke nothing could be heard fore and aft but the buzzing of the foam as it went along the ship's sides.

"Men," said I, "you have, all of you, heard by this time that your chief officer has been locked up in his cabin by order of the captain. I take it upon myself to tell you that there is not one atom of truth in Captain Flanders' accusation against Mr. Thomas. What I have now to say is this: that for some time before we took the north-east trades, I had a fear that the captain was not right in his mind, and my suspicions have been proved by his later actions. I am very sorry to have to tell you this. There is very much in Captain Flanders' character that is admirable, and his insanity has moved my deepest pity. Though the safety of the ship was concerned, yet I forbore to hint

my fears of the captain to any man aboard, wishing rather that you, men, should find out the truth for yourselves. However, matters have now reached a point when I find it time to speak out, and bring you all aft as witnesses. The captain, in the middle watch this morning, agreed to keep watch and watch with me; his watch has come around, and I have tried to wake him up: both the steward and I have knocked repeatedly, and we can get no answer from him. Whether mad or not, he is still our commander, and we all know what is expected of us and how we should act. Therefore I have called you aft to help me with your advice. I want you to tell me whether, seeing that he will not answer and that he is not responsible for his actions, we shall break open his door and, if we find him alive, take it upon ourselves, for our own lives' sake and for those of yonder ladies and gentlemen, to secure him, and answer for our conduct when we reach port."

The men looked at one another; they were much surprised; they knew that things were wrong aft, but they could not guess how wrong, nor that they had been called aft to listen to a proposal that struck some of them as mutinous.

Suddenly the boatswain stepped forward.

"Mr. Lee and shipmates," said he, "I've listened to what the second officer has said, and likewise have I watched the skipper, and I'm bound to say that I don't think Captain Flanders is in his right mind. Take that buryin' job of poor Lanyon. Take his pitchin' his dog overboard. Take his lockin' up Mr. Thomas, who, as every man here knows, is as good an officer as any sailor needs to sail with, a kind gentleman, and in-

capable of a wrongful act. Mates, if ye see a ship sailin' large with her torpsails furled, and nothen set but her top-gallants'ls, you may reckon the skipper's been taking more lunar observashuns than's good for his head. But to my way o' thinkin' queerer things ha' been done aboard this ship by the skipper than sailin' her under top-gallants'ls only. If he's in his cabin an' won't answer, there must be some bad reason at bottom, and as it may be a question of our lives, mates, and the salvation o' this ship, I'm for agreein' to what Mr. Lee says, and breakin' open the capt'n's door."

This short harangue put the matter in a new light before the men, who had probably found my address too tall for them. At all events, no sooner had the boatswain ceased than a murmur ran among them, and one sung out, "We're with the second officer: we all think he's quite right;" and another exclaimed, "If the skipper don't answer, it's right enough that his door should be busted open: there's no telling without it what may have come to him;" and several old seamen spoke, among them Chips the carpenter, who said that he never had any doubt, he hadn't, after seein' the way in which Lanyon had been buried, that the captain wasn't sound in his upper works. He had tried to arguey with the bo'sun, but it wasn't no use; the bo'sun knew better than he. He were only a pore ignorant ship's carpenter; the cook's mate could teach *him* to suck eggs, etc.; all which he delivered with his hands buried in his trousers pockets, and his head rolling from side to side as he addressed first his right-hand neighbour, then his left, then somebody astern of him.

Having heard all that they had to say, and being

fortified with the whole ship's company as witnesses, I ordered the carpenter to fetch the necessary tools to force the door; I also told two of the oldest seamen in each watch to stand out and follow the boatswain in the cuddy, and directed the rest of the men to go forward. I then turned to Mr. Black.

"You have heard," I exclaimed, "what has been said to the crew, and you can now judge the position we find ourselves in. I should be glad if you will join us as a witness, so that, should any inquiry follow this business, you may prove that in what we did we were governed entirely by regard for the general safety."

He looked uneasily at me, and said he would be glad if I could do without him.

"Will Mr. Espinosa come, then?" said I.

"No, no!" shouted the Spaniard, with a sharp decisive accent, and a swift downward gesture of the hand.

I did not press the matter, but calling to the boatswain's mate in the port watch, that watch being now on deck, to keep a look out whilst I went below, I entered the cuddy, where the boatswain, carpenter, and four able seamen were waiting for me, and we all went in a body to the captain's cabin.

"We'd better give him another chance and knock again, sir," says Sinnet, in a low, awed voice as we stood before the door.

"Very well," said I, and on that I raised my fist and struck the door heavily; but, as I expected, we got no reply. "Now, carpenter, do your work," I exclaimed, "and let us lose no more time."

Whereupon with a chisel and mallet he forced the lock, and the door opened. The moment we could see inside the cabin we raised a cry, for the first object that

met our eyes was the body of the captain hanging from a cot-hook screwed into a beam; he had used such a short length of rope that the nape of his neck was close against the hook, and his head lay pressed upon his bosom by the deck above. A yard away from him was an overset chair, and his feet dangled within a foot and a half of the deck. He was dressed in his shirt and trousers, and was perhaps in his bunk when the resolution to hang himself seized him. Though I own I had not expected to find him alive, yet now that I saw him hanging there dead, the realization of my fear so exceeded all that my imagination could have depicted, that I was seized with a trembling, and felt the perspiration clammy on my forehead. The manner in which his head was bowed down prevented us from seeing his face—at least the full horror of it in that posture was not visible—but his limbs were straight as though smoothed down into quietness by the hand, and only the clenched fists gave any indication of the last struggle.

Recovering myself promptly, I placed the chair upright, jumped upon it and cut the body down. It was caught by the carpenter and one of the seamen, who laid it along the bunk and unhitched the rope around the neck. However, he was not only dead, but had been dead for above an hour or even longer. He was very nearly cold, and so rigid that we could not compose the head back; and there he lay, with his head thrust forward so that his chin pressed his chest just below his throat; and if it had not been for his eyes and his perfect stillness, you would have thought he was alive, and endeavouring to catch sight of something beyond his feet.

When we had put him in his bunk, and after we were all satisfied that he was dead, I ran my eye around the cabin in the hope of finding something in writing; for I had heard that even the wildest madmen have had lucid intervals before they destroyed themselves, and written down in plain collected English their motives for committing suicide. However, nothing of that kind was to be seen. A large Bible lay open on his table, and all around were writing materials, a sextant, magnifying glasses, some scientific instruments and things of that kind, with a chronometer-case, on the top of which was the revolver he had carried. The cabin was in good order; there was no litter, no confusion; even the coat and waistcoat he had taken off before turning in were neatly folded upon a large mahogany chest.

"We can do nothing more, men," said I, speaking in a whisper; and we left the cabin, the carpenter jamming his chisel under the door to keep it closed. We stood together in the cuddy a short while, talking over what had happened, for we were all of us more shocked than I have words to tell. Had we merely heard that the captain had hanged himself we should not have thought so much of it; it was the sight of his body that made the thing awful, and, above all, his stiffened neck and his head erect when he was on his back, and in the attitude of a man gazing earnestly, though his eyes were as dead and glassy as the dead-lights in the deck.

"Having seen how he has died," said I, "none of you can have any doubt that he was mad; and that being so, we may take it that his suspicion of Mr. Thomas was only a part of his madness, like his

lecture over Lanyon, and his throwing his dog overboard. A man whom we know to be innocent ought not to be let suffer; and I therefore propose that we at once liberate Mr. Thomas, and that he take command of this ship."

They all promptly assented, and I unlocked the chief mate's door and knocked; and on his singing out for me to come in, I threw open the door. He had been writing, but had risen on hearing the key turned, and stood with his hand on a little table. The men kept at a respectful distance; however, we had moved so quietly and talked in such low voices, that beyond guessing by the thumping on the captain's cabin that there was trouble to get him to awaken, he had no idea of what had happened, and consequently a look of alarm came into his face when he saw the men in the cuddy.

To spare him any suspense I immediately told him that the captain was dead, that indeed he had hanged himself, that we had broken into the cabin and found the body, and that the men there were some hands I had called aft to witness to my conduct.

"Whilst the captain's death proves his insanity, sir," I said in a loud voice, that the men might hear me, "it also proves the groundlessness of his charges against you. This being so, Mr. Thomas, it became my duty to immediately release you, and it is now the general wish that you will take command and carry the ship to her destination. She could not be in safer hands, nor any ship's company desire a better and kinder commander."

"We're all of that opinion here, sir," said Sinnet, and the others murmured their assent.

The little man had turned very pale when he heard me say that the captain had hanged himself, but he listened to the end without interruption, and after shaking my hand turned to the men and thanked them for their words.

"So far from wishing to take the captain's life," said he, "I can only say it would go against my heart to hurt a fly; but now that we all of us know he was mad, I feel I shall take my old place again in your good will, as a seaman who has always tried to do his duty and whose log-book is a clean one."

No more was said in this way, on either side. Sailors are not fond of ceremony. We had done everything in a shipshape fashion, and all we had to do was to bury Captain Flanders and, as we say at sea, make a new point of departure. To the carpenter, who was also sail-maker, was left the task of sewing up the dead body in canvas and preparing it for a sea-burial; the others were sent forward to give the story to their mates, and Mr. Thomas and I went on the poop.

The passengers were all hanging about the companion in a great state of anxiety to hear the news; but if they hardly knew whether to look for the captain, they (that is, the Espinosas and Mr. Black) were quite unprepared to see the mate; and no sooner did Mr. Thomas show his head than Espinosa backed wildly into his wife and very nearly capsized her, and Mr. Black turned yellow, and his eyes became as round in his head as the buttons on his waistcoat. He immediately stammered out—

"Where is the captain, Mr. Lee?"

"He is dead," I replied, and was going to explain, when Espinosa shouted out from behind his wife—

"Dait! What you say, eh? de capitano dait?"

"Ay," said I, "as dead as hanging ever made a man."

"God guide us!" ejaculated Mr. Black, keeping the companion between himself and Mr. Thomas, and looking at him with an expression of horror. "Who has hanged him?"

"Why, he has hanged himself, sir," I replied; "and if Mr. Espinosa is not afraid to come within earshot, I shall be able to tell you and him all about it."

At the same time I beckoned to Nelly, who came over and shook hands with Mr. Thomas—an action that somewhat inspirited the others, for they all three of them drew near.

It took me a good twenty minutes to relate what I had to say, or rather to tell the story in such a fashion as to make them see how entirely true it was. The Spaniard incessantly ejaculated, and when I described the sight we had beheld in the cabin on our forcing open the door, Mr. Black groaned aloud, and Espinosa's legs quivered in his trousers. I informed them that the body was below; would they go and inspect it before the carpenter sewed it up? No, not for worlds. Mr. Black slewed himself away from me, and Espinosa shook his head as though he wanted to get rid of his nose. As to Madam Espinosa, she stood near her husband, listening to me with a face as white as a sheet; whilst Nelly was overwhelmed with horror, and kept on exclaiming to Mr. Thomas in a low voice as if she could not credit what she heard.

However, the truth was now out, and it was for Mr. Black and the Espinosas to make the best or worst of it. I had said all I considered necessary, and

after again pointing out that the most conclusive proof of the captain's insanity had lain in his suspicion of Mr. Thomas, I finished by saying that the chief mate would now take command of the vessel, and though no one was more grieved than I by the shocking end of a man whose many good qualities had won my cordial respect, yet, now that he was dead, and Mr. Thomas in command, I should be able to sleep with a sense of security I had not enjoyed for weeks. Hereupon Mr. Black came up to Mr. Thomas and shook his hand, very honestly saying that when Mr. Lee had acquainted him with the captain's suspicions he could not imagine they were unfounded, as he never had reason to suppose the captain insane, although he owned the poor fellow had sometimes talked oddly; but now that he had listened to Mr. Lee's story, he felt he had done the chief mate an injustice, and begged his pardon. Mr. Espinosa also came up and said something to Mr. Thomas, but what I did not hear, for I was then talking to Nelly.

So in this way we managed to get things into a proper course, which happily proved an easier job than I had reckoned on.

CHAPTER X.

CAPE HORN.

WE buried the remains of Captain Flanders at noon that day. Mr. Thomas read the service, and I noticed throughout that Chips listened with great satisfaction, and made many efforts to catch the eye of the boatswain, who, however, was not to be courted into looking his way. When at last the body was

overboard, and the grating replaced, every one experienced a feeling of relief. Out of respect to the memory of the skipper, no work had been done through the morning; the men, therefore, had had plenty of leisure to talk over him and his death, and, having some sort of superstition about suicides and foul winds, they were uneasy until they had given the corpse its last toss.

After the burial, the crew went forward to get their dinner; they were afterwards turned to and set about the different jobs which a ship is always requiring done, but they were serious enough for the remainder of the day. I heard no oaths, no loud laughs; they spoke in subdued voices, but it was not so much the gloom as the awe of death that kept them quiet. I believe that the old seamen I had taken with me aft made the most of the sight they had seen, and as one grim tale is sure to produce another in the fore-castle, I can well imagine the sailors got scaring one another with their stories.

And, to tell the truth, we who lived in the cuddy were depressed enough. When Thomas and I came to talk over the captain, we found, after all was said, that for anything that had been unpleasant only his madness was to blame. He had been a gentleman, a man of education, full of humanity, a man who understood his business as a sailor, and of strong religious feelings. This was to have been discovered by lifting up his madness, so to speak, and looking under it.

Mr. Black was especially gloomy. One would have thought him the last man in the world likely to be guilty of sentiment, and yet he was as superstitious as the most ignorant man in the fore-castle. He said

plainly enough at lunch that day, that he considered the captain's death a bad omen, and that, though he was not a rich man, he would be glad to lose a hundred pounds to be ashore, he didn't care where.

I told him I hoped his nervousness did not arise from any doubt of Mr. Thomas's capacity.

"Nay," he answered; "I have no doot that Mr. Thomas is a vary capable officer. It's not Mr. Thomas."

"What you say it is, den?" said Espinosa, who listened anxiously.

"Sir," said Mr. Black, "I'm a Scotsman, with Scotch prajudices, and I could not make a Spaniard understan' my thochts if I was to express them." •

"Prejudices often turn out to be very foolish things, Mr. Black," said Nelly.

"Then you do not believe in instinctive perçaptions, perhaps, Miss Maitland?" said Mr. Black.

"I don't know what you mean," said Nelly.

"By instinctive perçaptions I mean the poower of reading the future in signs and evants which come under our nooses, mam."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Black!" exclaimed Madam Espinosa, nodding approvingly at the Scotchman. "I would not walk under a ladder for worlds, and dreaming of a wedding makes me miserable for weeks."

"But what is it you fear, eh, Mistaire Black? What you frighten of, eh?" cried Espinosa, who, having been alarmed by the Scotchman's observations, and not understanding his metaphysics, wanted a plain answer.

"I could not mak' you understan' my reasoning," replied Mr. Black; "it would be wasting words, sir."

On this Espinosa asked his wife some questions in Spanish; but she waved him off with a "tut, tut."

"Valga me Dios!" shouted the Spaniard, losing his temper. "Mistaire Lee, please you tell me, sare, what for Mistaire Black is afraid?"

"Why, Mr. Espinosa, Mr. Black, I presume, is a believer in omens, and he thinks, because Captain Flanders hanged himself, that ill-luck will befall the *Waldershare*."

"That's aboot it," said Mr. Black.

"I don't know why you should think so, sir, for all that," said I, warmly. "We have a good officer in command, and a fine crew, and I hope I know my duty, Mr. Black."

"Lookee you here, shentleman, please," said Espinosa, with the calmness of desperation, rising from his chair and extending both his yellow claws to me; "veel you, once for all, tell me what is it you are afraid of? What is se dangaire? Mr. Black he veel not answare—Mr. Lee, veel you speak to me, saire?"

"There *is* no danger!" I shouted. "Mr. Black has got a notion into his head that we're all doomed. We can't help Mr. Black's notions, but we're not obliged to lose the ship because the captain has hanged himself!" And feeling rather angry, I got up, saying, "Miss Maitland, let me take you on deck," and we left them sitting at the table.

"Of all the abominable little cowards," I said to Nelly as we went up the companion steps, "that Spaniard is the worst. And what a vicious croaker is that same Black! Send him into the forecastle to palaver the crew, and I bet that presently not a hand would turn out to do a stroke of work for fear of meeting a ghost."

We found Mr. Thomas pacing the deck. I told

him what the passengers were talking about, and asked him to put a stopper on Black's tongue. I would keep a look out, I said, whilst he lunched. The wind had warmed up into a magnificent breeze, just free enough to enable us to carry the fore-topmast studding-sail, and we were running over the water as steadily and swiftly as a railway train. To find a fine steady breeze like this in these latitudes was a great piece of good fortune; it made this part of the voyage like a yachting trip. The heavens had the soft blue of the English summer sky, and the clouds which sailed along it were white, small, and full, like puffs of smoke. What little swell there was was right astern, and the ship went over it in such long, graceful sweeps that it was scarcely perceptible.

Now that there was no captain to watch me, and Mr. Thomas knew my story, I had no diffidence in talking to Nelly. We stood together to windward, looking over the rail at the ship's copper glancing through the tumble of foam and green water, and talked of Captain Flanders, home, the voyage, our experiences so far; and if we had been depressed before, we were, at all events, as happy now as two children, standing close together, with our hands clasped and hidden between us. Once again I told her that the dearest memory of my life would be the recollection of the courage and love that had brought her to my side, and made a long voyage so happy that I could never wish it ended.

"I always felt when I made up my mind to join you that you would not long remain angry," she answered, with a quiet smile. She then asked me if I thought Mr. Thomas was likely to command the ship

home? I said no doubt he would; that we should probably ship another mate at Callao, but whether a first or second mate I could not guess: if a second mate, which would only be fair to me, I should then be first officer, and having filled that post once, it was quite likely I should be appointed again, and then my next berth would be captain.

The mere talking of such things was enough to make me light-hearted. But I have seen hens cackle over chalk eggs, and I don't think I should have chatted so blithely had I known the sort of hatching job that lay before me.

At noon to-day we had found ourselves exactly one hundred miles north of the Line, having made ninety-eight miles southing since ten o'clock on the preceding night. If this breeze held, therefore, we should be on the other side of the equator at eight bells in the middle watch, for our speed now was nearer ten than nine knots.

After being absent half an hour—knowing I was with Nelly, the rogue might suspect I would not be impatient—Mr. Thomas came on deck laughing, followed by Mr. Black and the Espinosas, all whom seemed in a very much better humour than that I had left them in. He came over to me chuckling heartily, with his eyes merry and his face flushed; and I feared for the moment that his new command had slightly turned his head, and that he had been drinking to his own success a little too freely. However, his articulation was all right, and it turned out that his manner was simply owing to intense self-complacency: for first of all he had argued with Mr. Black on omens, in such a manner as to win a handsome compliment from that gentleman;

then he had convincingly satisfied Mr. Espinosa that he (namely, the Spaniard), had never been safer in all his life than he was now; then Madam Espinosa had been very gracious; and also he had told them some stories which had set them all laughing, and one tale had so tickled Mr. Espinosa that he made Mr. Thomas repeat it; in short, the three passengers had tried their best to make him amends for the injury they had done him in crediting Captain Flanders' suspicion, and had almost turned his head with their compliments. Madam Espinosa's politeness pleased him most: she used to be rude to him and even laugh at his size; but to-day she had flattered him. Indeed, he looked so pleased that I suspected she must have praised his togs, perhaps complimented him on his waistcoats; and as he had always secretly thought Madam Espinosa a fine woman, and as her ridiculing him had wounded his dandyism beyond anything he would have liked to own, her praising and complimenting him now made him feel himself a fine little fellow indeed.

Mr. Thomas was no Don Juan; but I once told him that his idea of heaven was sitting handsomely dressed in velvet and black cloth in the midst of a circle of stout tall women. "Tall? yes," he said. "Stout? well, stout too. I really think you've hit it, Lee." But dandy as he was, and peppery withal, there was no man I ever sailed with whom I liked better than little Abraham Thomas.

So, within a few hours after the death of Captain Flanders, the *Waldershare* was comfortable fore and aft, the men quiet and well disposed, full of confidence in the judgment and skill of their new commander, and the passengers satisfied and easy in their minds.

There was some talk between Mr. Thomas and me of bringing the boatswain aft as second mate; but we finally decided, for several reasons, on leaving him where he was, and where he was most useful, and on taking watch and watch, just as though the captain had been still aboard, during the rest of the voyage out. Such articles as we required to carry on the ship's reckoning we took out of the captain's cabin, and then Chips made the door fast. It was a cabin no one would have chosen to occupy after what had happened in it, and, indeed, no one cared to loiter near it after dark.

I have often laughed since at my superstitiousness, but I will own that many a time, when the cuddy has been lighted by only one dim lamp, I have gone below in the middle watch and glanced nervously aft at the cabin door as it stood dark with the shadow of the companion steps upon it, thinking of the dead man's singular belief in spirits, with an uncomfortable shiver, and wondering, if there *were* such things as ghosts, how they managed at sea, when every day's reckoning increased the distance of the body astern from the vessel it belonged to.

The rattling breeze carried us across the Line that night, and held until we were as far south as $4^{\circ} 24'$, veering sometimes to the southward, sometimes to the westward, sometimes laying our yards hard against the lee rigging, sometimes falling free and allowing us to carry topmast and top-gallant studding-sails. It then failed us, and for a whole week we lay boxing the yards about to the catspaws, but always sneaking steadily forwards, sometimes with barely enough air to lift the foot of the royals, and across a sea like burn-

ished brass, which the stem of the ship broke into a hundred threads.

I remember on one of these nights standing with Nelly watching the crescent moon rising like a blood-red Chinese lantern out of a haze as thick as a cloud in the south-west. The sea was quite calm; there was not a ruffle of air upon it, though some air there must have been aloft, for the ship was moving and the phosphorus was revolving in the eddies of the wake; the reflection of the moon in the water was exactly as though drops of blood were falling one after the other, and spreading as if the fluid mingled with the water as it sank; the stars were large, but hot and faint, and the ship lay all in darkness; when suddenly we heard a sound like a great sigh in the air, and presently another, and then another. One would have thought that old Neptune himself had risen to make his moan to Diana; the sound was surprisingly plaintive.

I knew what it was, but would not say, wanting to see the effect on Nelly. She looked all around and up in the air.

"Oh, Will! what can it be?" she asked.

"Not poor Captain Flanders, I hope," said I with a laugh; and, taking her hand, I led her across the deck.

"Where are they?" I inquired of the fellow at the wheel.

"Yonder on the port beam, sir."

"There! do you see that, Nelly?" I exclaimed; and there not above a biscuit's throw from the ship was a large whale or grampus, just risen, its back like a ship, keel up, the phosphorus glimmering all around it, and then it made the sound like a heavy respiration. Be-

fore it vanished another rose astern, and then another on the starboard quarter, and then another on the port bow, until the sea appeared full of them, and their breathing, mingled with the flap of the canvas and the wash of the water, and all the outer effect of the red moonlight dropping its lustre in the ocean, and the pale, hazy shine of the stars, and the darkness, was so impressive that we remained silent until the last respiration had ceased, and for some time we could only speak in whispers.

At last, on a Monday morning, a light breeze then blowing astern, the white trade-clouds showed overhead, and by two o'clock in the afternoon we had got the south-east trades strong on the port bow; and away sprang the ship like a thing possessed, her tall spars all aslant, the lee rigging as slack as the clewlines, and the leaping waters a smother of froth all around her. We took these trades in 10° S. and 27° W., the eastern coast of South America under our lee, and as I pricked off our course on the chart and my eye caught the name of Pernambuco, I wondered how it had fared with our Yankee friend, and whether his taut little barque was still struggling, like ourselves, with the sea, or safe in port.

We had a fine run as far as 33° S., when we lost the trades; then picked up a westerly gale with thick weather, which gave us double-reefed topsails and streaming decks for six days; and now it began to grow a little chilly, and Señor Espinosa was not seen often on deck.

Until we had doubled the Horn it seemed that we were to meet with no further adventures; everything of note had happened north of the Line. We did not

sight above three ships during the whole run down the South Atlantic, and no land but the eastern coast of the Falkland Islands; and then, when this land lay a mere blue shadow on the starboard beam, there being a heavy sea on, and blowing half a gale of wind from the north-west, we sighted a little brig right ahead, bound like ourselves round Cape Horn.

I had charge of the ship at the time, and Nelly asked me to run as close to the little vessel as I dared, that we might be able to see the people aboard and speak her. We were overhauling her hand over fist, and I ported the helm to go to windward of her, and stood with Nelly at the lee rail to look at her as we went past. I do not believe that she was more than a hundred tons burden, and she was loaded so deep that she seemed smaller than she was. She resembled a ship's long-boat. Her topsails were close reefed, and so low was she in the water that when she sank in the hollow of a sea nothing showed but these narrow bands of sail and her bare yards over them; indeed, every time she sank she appeared to have gone for good; it was enough to bring the heart into a man's throat to watch her. She rolled and pitched frightfully, and her masts waved to and fro like a stick in the hand of a band-leader.

Just before we got abreast of her she shipped a whole green sea right over her forecabin. It was like watching a breaker on a coast comb over a rock. She was hidden by the spray and the water, but up she came again, shaking her side like a dog, with the bright water streaming out of every scupper-hole, and pouring out of the foot of her fore-topmast staysail. She constantly pitched the whole length of her rudder

out of water, and then up would fly her bows and heave out ten feet of her keel into the air.

Her littleness amid the great rolling deep was enough to impress the memory, and she is before my mind's eye now as vividly as though I had just removed my gaze from her. When we were about a quarter of a mile astern of her, she hoisted English colours; the flag was run up and blew right away out over the sea, but when it was half-mast high they stopped hoisting.

"By George!" I shouted, "she's in distress after all! What on earth shall we be able to do for her in this sea?"

But on looking at her through the glass I found there was a turn in the signal halliards, and at the same moment they lowered away the flag, bent it on afresh and hoisted it chock a block; and as the meteor flamed at the peak, the plucky little vessel almost leaped right out of water, as though she rebuked us for daring to think that the seas were too much for her.

As we approached, a man wrapped in oilskins stood upon the bulwarks just abaft the weather main-rigging, holding on to a backstay with one hand whilst with the other he flourished a speaking-trumpet. When she rolled towards us, the toppling water stood high above the man's head, and I expected every minute to see him washed away. Two men stood at the little wheel, and a large black retriever dog ran up and down the deck, barking furiously at us as we approached.

She proved to be the *Betsy*, from Monte Video to Huasco; and the master, through his trumpet, asked me for my latitude and longitude. We passed her too

rapidly for much speaking, and in a few minutes she was on our lee quarter. I noticed a man clamber out on the jibboom to snug the jib, that showed some disposition to blow clear of its gaskets. Three times whilst he was there the vessel buried her bowsprit, and he disappeared under the water, each time emerging dripping like a drowned rat, and hove high in the air until he could have looked down upon the vessel as if she stood on end on her stern. We watched her rising and falling, sometimes the whole of her hull poised on the top of a tall sea, sometimes even her topsails invisible, until she vanished in the haze and mist of spray that thickened the horizon.

This gale carried us down as far as the latitude of Staten Island; a dead calm then followed it, the horizon all around as thick as pea-soup, and a heavy South Pacific swell rolling up from the westward.

To know what a heavy swell really means, one must be becalmed off Cape Horn. Happily the calms, as a rule, are very short-lived; but whilst they last they are worse than gales of wind. Being without steerage way, the vessel falls broadside on, and rolls both yardarms to the water's edge. It is impossible to stand without holding on, it is difficult to sit, it is almost as difficult to lie. Everything not securely lashed fetches away. The confusion aboard the *Waldershare* for two hours during this calm was supreme. We where at lunch when the wind suddenly left us, and in a few moments the vessel had rolled pretty nearly everything off the table. The steward, whilst picking up the things on the deck, cut his hand with a piece of broken glass, and the pain or the sight of the blood startling him, he jumped up in a hurry, was

thrown headlong against my chair, and sent me sprawling. Madam Espinosa, seeing me disappear, and the vessel rolling at the same moment with a really awful lurch, *dishing* the green water over her quarter-deck bulwarks, a hundred articles bolting and clattering to leeward at the same moment, while the groans and shrieking of the timbers and bulkheads and cargo of the whole ship were deafening, uttered a scream, shouting out, "We're sinking! we're sinking!" and, in her terror, threw her arms round the neck of her husband, who received at the same moment the contents of a water-jug in his waistcoat, whilst a large leg of cold roast pork went walloping down under the table against his legs. Attacked in this way in the neck, bosom, and legs, and the slop and temperature of the deluge of cold water helping to give a peculiar edge to the shriek of his wife in his ear, the Spaniard (of whose courage I have already recorded my opinion) started up, and, in his effort to free himself from his wife's embrace, not only tumbled her over, but fell under the table himself.

So now here were four of us sprawling upon the deck, whilst the cries of Madam Espinosa, the execrations of her husband, the smash of plates and dishes, and, above all, the frightful straining of the ship, produced an uproar, and an alarming uproar too, of a kind no words could furnish any idea of.

Though it was easy to fall down, it was extremely hard to get up again; and as the steward had vanished to bind up his hand, and as Mr. Black durst not let go of the table for fear of rolling under it, and Nelly was also holding on for dear life, there was no one to help me pull Madam Espinosa out and set her on her

legs again. However, heavy as she was, I succeeded in getting her on to a chair, but I gave myself no trouble with her husband; my contempt of his cowardice stopped me from lending him a hand, and I let him crawl about among the dishes until he emerged near the mizzen-mast with a small cut over his eye—of which, however, he was not sensible, until Nelly told him he was bleeding; when, putting his hand to his forehead and bringing it away with blood upon it, he roared out something in Spanish, and, after a good deal of reeling and diving, fetched his cabin and shut himself up.

Soon after I had gone on deck, to keep a look-out for Thomas whilst he lunched, I saw that we should not long be bothered by this calm; for all away in the quarter out of which this mountainous swell was rolling was a long, broad livid cloud, with a sort of whitish haze hanging about it, that a man had only to look at to know to be snow. We had double-reefed topsails and the foresail set; but Thomas (coming on deck to my call), not knowing but that there was a hurricane in the cloud, sung out for all hands to shorten sail: and scarcely were the reef-tackles hauled out, when the ship lay down like an anchored buoy in a race-current to a real Cape Horn blast, with the air so full of snow that it was like shaking the inside of a feather-bed over a man, and the air so dark that you couldn't see the mainmast from the wheel.

In a minute the decks were all white with snow fore and aft, and the yards, masts, and standing rigging lined with it; the cold was so intense that the tears froze in one's eyes, and the snow turned to ice on the decks and made them fit only for skates. The

men aloft on the yards glimmered in the gloom and through the blinding fall of snow like snow-figures; indeed, it was as if a whole mountain of snow had fetched away to windward and was blowing athwart us in broad sheets.

However, the wind was not so fierce but that we could carry the three close-reefed topsails and storm trysail; and though the snow and the cold and the darkness were bad enough, yet to my mind they were not so bad as the calm they had replaced, for the ship was comparatively steady, and ratching to the southward and eastward through a sea that was rising quickly.

That the seas off the Horn should be the heaviest in the world is not surprising when it is considered that the ocean there completely belts the globe; so that a man who should start, say, abreast of the Horn on the parallel of 58° could run the whole length of the latitudinal line, and arrive back at the point of his departure, without meeting any other hindrance than ice.

We had a taste not only of the weather, but of the seas of this part of the globe, during the next two days; for after the snow-squall had passed, the wind settled down into a heavy gale, and by the first dog-watch it was blowing so furiously that we were obliged to heave the ship to under a close-reefed main-topsail.

It was a fine, clear night, with brilliant stars, the Southern Cross hanging in full glory, and the Magellan clouds like small heaps of luminous dust upon the black-blue sky to the southward of our royal-masthead. When the snow cleared off we had sighted a large iceberg away on the horizon on our lee quarter, and

every time the seas hove us high we could see it quite plain in the darkness, like a very faint greenish cloud, though it was fully seven or eight miles distant. But the sea was so magnificent a sight that I made up my mind that Nelly should see it; and she came on deck for the first time that day, as well wrapped up as a Greenland woman. I dragged her to windward and stationed her under the hurricane-house, by which name we distinguished a square of canvas seized on to the lower mizzen-rigging to serve the officer on duty as some protection against the wind; and passing the bight of a rope round her waist, I secured her to a belaying-pin, for I wanted my own hands, and did not intend that she should trust to hers, seeing that when the ship heeled over to leeward the deck made such a slope that it was like sitting on the top of a wall and looking down, and that, had she let go, she would have gone overboard or broken her neck against the hencoops.

Once secured and safe, and looking about her, she was speechless for awe and astonishment; indeed, used as I was to the sea, I had never seen it so grand and monstrous as on this night. Every time the ship sank, the wave to windward appeared to stand as high as the mizzen-top; one could only hold on and look, and stop breathing. The receding surge left her spars bending to meet the coming sea, and her deck lay all aslope ready to receive the ponderous world of water; but then, as it came roaring at her, its flickering top blotting out the stars halfway to the zenith, the ship would heel away from it, heel further and further yet, as she mounted the almost perpendicular mountain and hung as though some giant hand held her out at

arm's length by the keel, until she had soared to the summit upon which for a moment she could lie with a level deck. And this was the moment to look down over her side; for you gazed into a black pit filled with the roar of raving waters, and the fierce artillery of expiring foam, whilst the sea as far as the horizon raged below like a hilly country viewed from a mountain. In a moment, as the ship went down the further slope, she heeled over to windward, and the forcing of her mast against the gale multiplied the screaming and hooting in the rigging, until she had sunk to the bottom of the hollow, between the sea that had left her and the sea that was coming upon her, when the trysail would flap idly in the calm while the wind still yelled in her top-gallant and topmast rigging.

Coming on deck from the cuddy and witnessing such a sight on a sudden would have alarmed a hardier mind than even brave little Nelly's. Below, one could not have imagined the terror and sublimity of this mighty Pacific Sea merely from the sweeping, headlong motion of the ship. However, in a short time her fear passed. I told her, as well as the uproar would let me, that the vessel was absolutely under control and behaving nobly, and bade her take her fill of the sight without any misgiving. Had the ship been sinking, and I had assured her there was no danger, she would have believed me. Her confidence in me was the finest and highest part of her love, and as she stood holding on my arm whilst I supported myself by grasping the rigging, I felt the strength and tenacity our love was getting out of this voyage that she was making with me.

For two days, as I have written, this gale held, and

we lay hove to in the terrific sea, coming to and falling off as regularly as the coil of the waves, and going bodily to the eastwards on the trend of the combers. On the third day the gale veered to the northward, which gave us a beam wind; and we made the most of it, as any man may believe, for we had had as much of Cape Horn as we wanted, and our frozen toes and our frozen tears, which hung literally like iron on our nipped and weather-beaten cheeks, made us pine for latitudes lying nearer the sun.

We had eight degrees to run to the westward yet before we hauled to the northward, Mr. Thomas's notion of doubling the Horn being to pass wide of the Falklands well to the southward of the Cape, and not to head north until the ship was in 84° W., "for this rule," said he, "provides against the nor'-nor'-westers." Our true course now, therefore, was the sun's, and every evening he should set over our flying jibboom end; but Thomas, for the sake of speed and to bring the wind and the sea abaft the beam, did not object to a little southing (our latitude being $56^{\circ} 19'$); that is, while the sky held clear and there was no danger of running into an iceberg before sighting it.

And so, with a whole gale a couple of points abaft the beam, and the sea a little further aft yet, we shook three reefs out of the main-topsail, set the top-gallant sail over it, set the double-reefed fore-topsail and reefed foresail, and these, with the main-trysail, fore-topmast staysail, and inner jib, ran the *Waldershare* through it as though a comet had got her in tow; she had never before approached such sailing. She ran almost as fast as the seas which broke under her into whole oceans of foam. On either counter the froth

stood as high as the main-brace bumpkins; one could almost have reached a handful of it by bending over the poop-rail. The rigging, frozen as hard as iron, stood like crowbars, and our wake astern ran over the green transparent hills like a broad white dusty highway over mountains.

But even this pace would not suit Mr. Thomas. "We have been two days hove to," he said, "and becalmed for some hours. If the ship has it in her she shall make up for lost time;" so it was "out with more reefs," the whole main-topsail and foresail were set, the mainsail reefed and the tack boarded, the whole watch tailing on to the jigger and bousing the tack down, until it seemed as if the deck would be ripped out of the ship.

This, I remember, was on a Thursday morning, and the extra canvas had been set by the time I came on deck a little before noon with my sextant in hand. All the passengers were on the poop, for the sun shone bright—a silvery, brilliant light, without a particle of heat in it—and over the steel-blue sky the clouds were driving to the south in volumes like smoke. Lying in my bunk, I had felt that the ship was being furiously driven by the strain and quiver, the fierce quick trembling, the terrific booming of the sea like the report of an earth-quake, the ceaseless roaring to right and left, and the feel of the whole hull as she made her flying leaps from crest to crest.

But the reality could not be understood until it was seen, and it was not until I reached the deck that I began to think my little shipmate was overdoing it; that the mainsail he had set was just the extra amount of canvas she could not bear, and that if we didn't

bring some of our spars about us presently we should deserve all the congratulations we were likely to get.

However, I had to take an observation before I could look about me, and when that was done, I put my sextant down and took a squint aloft with a shake of my head, for I knew that Thomas was watching me, though it was not my place to remonstrate in words. He merely replied to my silent protest with a grin, and went up to the passengers, rubbing his hands and beating them about his chest, and looking at Mr. Black and around him as much as to say, "What think you of this, ladies and gentlemen?" And, indeed, they were as pleased as he, and I caught Espinosa (who was wrapped in an immense fur coat, with a cape that came over his head, in the hairy embrasure of which nothing was visible but his nose, that stuck far out and was *scaling* like the flesh after a fever, from the cold) nodding with great delight. But Nelly, who observed every movement of mine, had seen me shake my head, and though her eyes sparkled like diamonds, and her cheeks were as red as roses under the keen gale, she no longer looked approvingly at Mr. Thomas.

Suddenly a voice hailed the poop. "Ice right ahead, sir!"

I sprang to the rail and thrust my head overboard to see forward; and as the ship soared on a sea there stood on the horizon, right in a line with our jibboom, a pale broad outline like a faint greenish cloud.

"Shall we go to leeward or to windward of it, sir?" I sung out to Mr. Thomas, who had perched himself on a hencoop and was looking at the ice with his arm entwined in the mizzen-rigging.

"Why, to leeward, Mr. Lee. Put your helm over,—so, you have it—keep her at that now. Can you make out any more of them, Mr. Lee?"

"No sir," I answered; and hailing the forecastle, I told one of the men to jump aloft and let me know if there were any more icebergs in sight ahead. He went as high as the fore-topmast cross-trees, and after looking, called out that he could only see that one.

He had scarcely said this when the maintack parted with a loud report; the sheet carried away at the same moment; a few seconds after the jib split right in halves, and then commenced a horrible hulla-baloo. The beating of the canvas was like peals of thunder or discharges of heavy artillery. Before half the watch were on their legs the mainsail was in rags, whipping round and round the mainstay like parcelling, writhing about the main rigging, or streaming straight out in the wind in long whips, while the jibboom jumped under the shattering dance of the jib, and the hanks rattled on the stay as though rounds of grape were being fired into the bows of the ship.

However, though we had lost two sails our spars were safe, and the ship was as easy again, though even now she was carrying all the canvas she needed, and when she dipped her head she piled the foam over her top-gallant forecastle, where it was caught by the wind pouring in fury out of the foot of the foresail, and blown high in the air and half a mile to leeward. We had men enough in the watch to make short work of the shattered canvas, and by the time they had come from aloft, the iceberg lay broad on our port bow.

It was one of the largest I had ever seen, and for shape and colour the finest. The mind could not con-

ceive anything more grand and awful in its solitude than this iceberg. When one sees a number of icebergs together, the contrast lessens their impressiveness. You find yourself wondering which is the biggest, and comparing their appearance; and as one courts your eye away from another, you cannot concentrate your admiration; and, moreover, the idea of solitude, that is one of the elements of sublimity, is not conveyed.

But here, towering upon the water, whose mighty waves burst against its motionless sides and veiled the lower part of it in a haze of spray, was a single iceberg as large as an island, with glittering peaks pointing like spires and minarets to the heavens, the whole gigantic body dwarfing our ship into a mere jolly-boat; whilst the sun, that stood to leeward of us, poured upon it its light which the flying clouds sometimes obscured, so that at one moment the huge and beautiful mass was sparkling as if a thousand dazzling many-coloured fires had been kindled among its transparent blue and green ledges, and in its marble-coloured boulder blocks, and in its luminous ravines, and in its tall, crystalline pinnacles, whilst at another moment the gorgeous sparkles would vanish out of it as though the breath of the gale had extinguished them all at once, and the huge shape, under the shadow of a cloud, would turn to a desolate ashen grey, the bleaching of the snow on the summit strongly marked upon the greenish rock-like transparency of the lower parts, while every stroke of the sea awoke a hollow roaring that filled our ears as the ship went rushing past. It was the only object in sight all around the horizon, and the mere effect of the loneliness of it upon the

imagination, its resemblance to an island with spires and outlines of dwelling-places upon it, and the thought that it was all solid ice, the most desolate thing in the world—though a little heat would melt it all away, so that not a vestige would remain of that stupendous body, around which the seas were roaring and beating themselves to pieces as they might against a granite coast—filled the mind with thoughts beyond the power of the strongest pen to express. As it receded astern it seemed to change its colour a hundred times over, being at one time a faint green, then blues and violets stealing into it, then flashing out all in a white blaze, then standing like the summit of a gigantic height of white marble, whose base was at the bottom of the sea, until it became at last as we had first beheld it, a mere pale, faint cloud upon the horizon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WATER-LOGGED BRIG.

ON Monday, September 16th, we were in latitude 35° S., and longitude 97° W., having been blown nearly three hundred miles to the westward of our course by a hurricane from the north-east, that caught us when we were about two hundred and fifty miles west of Narborough Island, and heading for Callao, which port we had reckoned on making by September 20. The like of that hurricane I had never before experienced; but because I have already given so many close accounts of the storms we met with, I have purposely skipped it here, wishing, indeed, to make some haste to come to that part of my story that most closely affects myself. Through newspapers, which afterwards

came to hand, I learnt that the force of the gale had been felt from Lima to Valdivia along a stretch of coast upwards of sixteen hundred miles in length, and that it had caused a known loss of nearly two hundred vessels, including a Chilian war-ship; that the whole seaboard was strown with wreckage that came ashore chiefly down between Cobijo and Huasco, and that to the westwards the hurricane was felt as far as the easternmost of the group of islands which are marked in the charts as the Low Archipelago; so that it may be said to have ravaged nearly a third of the South Pacific Ocean extending from the coast of South America westward as far as the South Sea Islands.

Nothing but Mr. Thomas's skill as a practical seaman, who knew his ship as familiarly as a rider knows the horse he has sat for months, coupled with the magnificent build and noble sea-going qualities of the *Waldershare*, could have saved the vessel. For two whole days and a night both he and I honestly believed that every next plunge she took in the tremendous seas would be her last. We neither of us slept, never once shifted our clothes, and only left the deck to run below and swallow the food necessary to keep body and soul together. The wonder of this terrible time was that even when the gale was at its height, the sky was as clear as a summer's day sky in England; there was not a cloud to be seen, the sun shone brightly all day and the heavens were full of stars all night. The gale began and ended in this brilliant way, and yet never a fiercer gale blew in any quarter of the globe; and to feel the force of the wind, and to look at the raging sea, and then to gaze up at the

beautiful sky, was a contrast that filled the mind with astonishment.

The gale, having blown itself out, left us all on a sudden on Monday, at three a.m. We had then nothing on the ship but a small main-staysail, having furled the main-topsail when the gale first struck us before it should be blown out of the bolt-ropes. The sea then went down with surprising rapidity, and soon after daybreak we had got most of the canvas set again. Fierce as the hurricane had been, it had done us no hurt whatever; the ship was as tight as a cork, not a spar was sprung, and when we had made sail and hauled everything taut, and washed and coiled down fore and aft, the whole ship looked as bright and smart as if she had just come out of dock.

Nevertheless, it was our bad luck, that though we had been seventy-six days in performing so much of the voyage as had been accomplished, we were some hundreds of miles out of the track of our course; and when I came on deck on this Monday morning at eight o'clock, and saw the sea heaving in a calm all round, and sparkling under the hot high sun with a kind of yellowish brilliance, as though we were afloat on an ocean of oil, a feeling of strong impatience seized me, a longing for the land: I was weary, weary of the eternal water-line circling us for ever, tired to death of the restless play of the deck under my feet, and of the perpetual scene of hull and spar and sail.

The truth was, I was more exhausted by our late tremendous buffeting, and the violent anxiety I had shared with Mr. Thomas, than I was fully sensible of. Moreover, I had found another source of depression, in the indication of the barometer; the mercury had,

indeed, risen, and yet, if I may so say, there was a want of buoyancy in it—it expressed a sort of hesitancy; indeed, it gave me this idea, that I might look at it in another half-hour's time and find it very low again. The mere circumstance of the sky being a bright blue, and all around us looking true Pacific weather, brought no sense of security after the gale that had blown under a heaven as brilliant as what we now had.

Still, there was no reason, even if it did come on to blow again, why we should have the wind dead on end, and why it should amount to a gale; and I owned to myself that I would rather deal with a gale that would let us hold our course for Callao than be humbugging about in this calm.

A hearty breakfast made me feel more of a man. I came on deck and found Thomas showing the passengers the position of the ship upon a chart that he had laid upon the skylight. He talked like a schoolmaster teaching pupils geography, and it was impossible to help laughing at the way in which Espinosa hung his great nose over the chart, repeating what Mr. Thomas said in broken English, like one of a congregation following a parson reading a prayer.

Mr. Black, however, was not at all satisfied to learn that we were some hundreds of miles out of our course.

"I cannot but think, Mr. Thomas," said he, "with all deference to your better judgment, that had the sheep's head been laid towards the land, the gale would have driven us that way."

"But can't you see, Mr. Black, that the ship's head *couldn't* have been laid towards the land—or at least towards that part of it we want to make—because

the hurricane was blowing direct from that quarter?" exclaimed Mr. Thomas. "I wonder that a mathematician like you can't see so simple a thing as this."

"Well, sir, as I have said, with daference, I am obliged to own that I cannot see it," replied Mr. Black. "Here, sir, you have a sheep so constructed as to sail at richt angles with the wind, and I contend, with humeelity, that had the ship's course been adjusted to the wind, and her head pointed to the land, she'd have gone that way, and the hurricane would have been powerless to stop her."

"Yes, 'sir," cried Thomas, warmly, "and here are you, Mr. Black, with two legs so constructed as to walk with the wind in your teeth; but if the wind is so strong as to tumble you over on your back and oblige you to throw your coat-tails over your arms and scud before it, where are you then, Mr. Black, eh, sir? What becomes of your construction and your theories, sir?"

But the obstinate Scotchman was not to be convinced; he merely shook his head, exclaiming, "Vary well, vary well; I merely give my opeenion with daference," which was the more annoying to hear, since, as I have already said, the ship's salvation was entirely owing to Thomas's practical skill; and I will go so far as to say that in my hands, or even in the hands of a better seaman than I, instead of three hundred, she might have been blown five hundred miles out of her course.

Nelly, who had left the group round the skylight, had stationed herself near the quarter-boat, and was looking very earnestly out to sea. I believed she was admiring the colour of the water, as it rose and fell,

the sunlight falling in silver on the slant of the swell, whilst in the hollows lay a shadow of burnished violet. Presently she came up to me.

"Will," said she, "can you see anything out there?"

I looked in the direction she pointed to, but in consequence of my sight having been weakened by the long all-night watches I had been keeping, I could see nothing.

"What do you see, Nell?" I asked.

"I fancied I saw just now a line like the mast of a ship sticking up out of the water—a long way off; but it has disappeared."

I looked again, but could make out nothing, and believing her to have been mistaken, I dismissed the subject from my mind. Meanwhile, the sea lay calm as a pond over the move of the gradually subsiding swell, and the sun shone very hot, but the air was extraordinarily sweet and balmy, and the water like a looking-glass; the quarter-boat that hung over the ship's side was reflected with all its colour and the sheen of the sun in it, like a boat bottom up. The counterfeit was startling: every line clear as in a picture, with not a tremor to blur it; and if you looked over, there was your face watching you some fathoms deep in the water, that was as transparent as thin-blown bottle-green glass.

On the forecastle the watch below were busy in hanging up their clothes to dry, and all that part of the ship was soon adorned with a pleasing variety of trousers, coats, and shirts, slung in rows and dangling in such a manner as to give one a lively idea of the different sizes of the men. I called some hands aft and got the awning spread, and this made the poop

luxurious. Espinosa lay smoking in an armchair; Madam Espinosa knitted; Mr. Black flitted about the deck, making notes in a pocket-book, stopping to bite his pencil with a frown, and evidently greatly exercised; and Nelly sat dreaming with a book in her lap. For my part I walked the deck languidly, stopping once or twice to say a word to Nelly, but never lingering; for I made it a rule to keep myself as much as possible to myself during my watch, when the passengers could see me. I was somewhat depressed in spirits, but I attributed it to the anxiety I had gone through; yet I could not rid myself of the despondency. I felt myself worrying over something that I could not come at. Sometimes I wondered if I was going to be ill, for it was impossible to imagine what it was that fretted and saddened me.

The morning stole on, and at about eleven o'clock the white water in the south became dark, and I saw that a little breeze was coming down upon us from that quarter. It was a nice little air, and darkened the water in a straight line as it came along, making it a deep blue, whilst in front of it lay an oily surface of greenish grey. It took us aback, as a gale might have done for the matter of that, for the ship lay like a log, without an inch of steerage way on her; but in a few minutes we had got the yards trimmed, and the water began to tinkle past us.

We had been holding on in this way for about twenty minutes, when a man who had come out of the foretop, and was standing midway on the rigging, looking away on the starboard bow, with his hand shading his eyes, sung out, "There's a wreck away yonder, sir."

On this Nelly left her chair, and coming to where I stood, looked for a little while, and, pointing with her finger, exclaimed, "There it is, Will. That's the same thing I saw before. It is like a pole sticking up."

I rubbed my eyes, but still I could not see, and, much annoyed, I went for the glass, and then it was plain enough. I saw two masts erect in the water, both with square yards on them; but, so far as I could make out, the foremast consisted only of a lower mast and half a topmast, with a quantity of confused rigging and spars hanging about it, whilst the other mast was complete, even to the royal yard.

"Can you see anything of her hull?" I called to the man, who still stood in the fore-rigging, looking her way.

"No, sir; she looks hull down up here, sir."

"Not hull down behind the horizon, surely!" I exclaimed to Nelly, whilst I took another squint through the glass.

"What ees it, Mistaire Lee?" demanded Espinosa, leaving his chair.

"Why, to all appearance, the wreck of a vessel," I answered; "but we shall see more of her presently."

The pace of the *Waldershare* was so slow under the light air, which even now was growing fainter, that three-quarters of an hour elapsed before the object we had sighted could be clearly made out by the glass. It then proved to be the wreck of a brig, with nothing of her hull visible above water but her bulwarks, with a raised cabin aft painted white and a small galley forward. So far as I could distinguish, she had lost her jibboom and carried away her fore-topmast, that hung down supported by the rigging,

leaving the topsail yard on the cap. Her sides, like those of our own ship, were painted green, and this was the reason, perhaps, why we had not sighted the hull, or that portion of it that was visible, sooner.

By noon she was distant about one and a half miles. The little air that had been stirring about our loftier canvas now completely died out, and once more the sea took its aspect of burnished surface, very softly heaving in quiet folds.

I went below after taking sights, but not to sleep, for my restlessness and uneasiness were even stronger upon me now than before, and to this was added a sort of nervous excitement. Attributing my bad spirits to the wear and worry of the past week, I was mortified to think that a man so robust as I should be beaten in mere physical endurance by so small and slender a figure as Thomas, who was as brisk as a bird, and had made nothing of a spell of four and twenty hours on deck in a hurricane strong enough to blow the eyes out of one.

I lay in my bunk reading until the luncheon bell rang, and then got up and went to the table. I found Nelly full of the wreck; and, indeed, the others could find nothing else to talk about.

"I cannot help thinking, Mr. Lee," said Nelly (she called me by that name when others were present, though she sometimes made a grimace when she pronounced it), "that there may be people on board that vessel; and, do you know, I have been begging Mr. Thomas to send a boat to her, just to satisfy my curiosity, and he has promised to do so if this calm lasts."

"But what makes you think there are people aboard of her?" I asked.

"It's a mere fancy, I own: but suppose there *should* be people in the little white house on deck—dying, perhaps, or too weak to crawl out and make signs to us—how dreadful it would be to sail away and leave them!"

She looked at me wistfully and longingly with her fine eyes; it was just as if she had said, "Oh, Will, I *may* be right: isn't it our duty to send a boat?"

"The quastion to me is," said Mr. Black, "whether by sending a boot to the vassel we should not be losing time if the wind got up?"

"Oh, Mr. Black, what is the loss of a few hours, even a few days, compared to saving a human life!" exclaimed Nelly.

"True," said Mr. Black, reflectively; "true, Miss Maitland. That's a reflaction that deserves conseederation."

"But suppose, if there *are* people on board, they should be dead?" said Madam Espinosa.

"Why, then we should know they are dead," I answered.

"Yes, but you wouldn't bring the dead bodies away, would you?" she cried.

"Perhaps not," said I.

"Zere have been two daid body alreaty," said Espinosa, holding up two fingers. "My vife is right—more we do not want."

However, Nelly seemed to think there might be people aboard, and kept on saying there could be no harm in sending a boat, and talked so earnestly about it, that I said I would go on deck and have a look at the vessel, and see what Mr. Thomas thought. So, when I had finished my lunch, I went on the poop,

and Nelly and the others came after me; for the truth was, our conversation had kindled our curiosity, and I was as willing that a boat should be sent as any of them.

The moment Thomas saw me, he dived for his lunch—no man ever loved eating better, though he was no glutton—and I took the glass and very leisurely had a long look at the brig. Lying within a mile and a half of us, the glass brought her close alongside, so to speak; and I now perceived that her cargo was timber, her deck-load standing nearly flush with the rail of her bulwarks, and that she was sunk to within an inch or two of her scuppers, her bulwarks being hove clear above the water. So far as I could judge by examining her thus, she appeared a vessel of about two hundred tons burden. She had one boat hanging at the starboard davits literally broken in halves, the keel amidships gaping open like the beak of a bird, but the falls on this side were overhauled and the blocks buried in the water, and her long-boat was gone.

She appeared to have been a taut little brig, by the stay of her masts and the general character of her gear and spars; her lower rigging had a wide spread, like a ten-gun brig's, and her tops were also large for her size, and her topsail and lower yards were long, heavy, and powerful spars. The canvas lay furled snugly enough on the yards, and the only injuries which she had sustained up aloft were the loss of her fore-topmast, half of which hung up and down with the royal-masthead resting on the deck, and her jibboom, of which no fragment remained. She was full of water, and was only kept afloat by the timber in her; but though she rose and sank to the swell, her

high and very solid bulwarks kept the run of the sea clear of her decks, and full as she was, yet there was a certain spring in her very wallowing that made me fancy the time was when nothing lighter than that same half-sunk and stupefied little brig had ever danced and frolicked over the ocean wave.

Nelly and the others stood around me whilst I examined the wreck, and when I put the glass down, my sweetheart wanted to know if there were any signs of life to be seen?

"No," I answered; "if there are any people aboard of her they are in one of the houses on deck."

"But do you think there *are* any people on board?" Mr. Black asked.

"How can I tell without going to look, Mr. Black? Miss Maitland's idea is there may be one or more persons dying in the cabin yonder, or too exhausted by suffering, or by hunger and thirst, to crawl out and show themselves; and although I think that the chances are fifty to one against our discovering anybody living, yet, as there are no signs of a breeze, I do not know why we should not lower a boat. What you have to consider is, yonder vessel may have been knocking about as you see her for weeks, for she looks to be a strongly built craft, and would take even more than the hurricane we have experienced to break her up; in which case, if there are people aboard of her they may be starving to death."

"Well, then, if that's the case we should be acting like pagans not to send a boat," said Madam Espinosa; and that was the general opinion when Mr. Thomas came on deck.

Nelly immediately began with him, repeating my

arguments. He laughed and looked around the horizon, exclaiming, "What do you think, Mr. Lee? is she worth boarding?"

"Why, I might jump into one of the boats with a couple of hands, just to satisfy the ladies," I answered, smiling at Nelly.

"Very well," said he; and hailing the boatswain, he sung out to him to send some hands aft to man and lower the starboard quarter-boat. I was in the act of getting into the boat when Nelly, who had disappeared in a violent hurry, came running up to me with a soda-water bottle containing brandy, which I suppose the steward had filled for her. "Should you find anybody ill you may require this," said she, thrusting the bottle into the pocket of my coat. Then, seeing the men grinning, she blushed a deep scarlet; but Mr. Thomas came to her rescue with, "That shows real foresight, Miss Maitland; but it is not every lady who thinks of poor Jack as you do;" on which the boat was lowered into the water and we shoved off.

A couple of hands pulled the boat. She was heavy enough to need four had there been any wind, but it was so calm and breathless that a boy might have sculled her; so calm and so breathless, indeed, that when, being a few lengths from the ship, I turned to look at her, I beheld one of the fairest sights of reflected beauty that placid water ever offered to the eyes. Such was the transparency or rather I should say the reflecting power of the surface of the deep, that the *Waldershare* seemed fixed in a vast sheet of looking-glass grooved where she lay to receive her beautifully moulded hull, leaving exposed the swell of her sides and the delicate curves of her bows and

stern, but duplicating in its steel-like depths with exquisite accuracy every portion of her—from the green bend at the silvery edge of the water up to her royal-masthead—so that, from the point at which I looked at her, there lay just beneath the ship the perfect form and figure of an inverted vessel, with the sails gleaming like ivory as they hung in the delicate blue, and every glint of the sun, and the fiery lines in her masts, and her glittering gilt figure-head, with the white jibs suspended without a swim or quiver of the perfect outlines, reproduced with an added glow or gleam of colour such as one sees in the reflection of an object in a soap-bubble, or on the silver plate of a daguerreotype. Once, when she rolled, she threw a few ripples from her side, in which her lovely inverted image quivered as if a haze of heat had tarnished for a moment the polished surface of the mirror; and then the picture brightened forth again and hung so steadily, that no painted ship on canvas, with its outline hanging beneath it, could be more quiet.

"She looks a real beauty," said the man nearest to me, as though speaking to himself.

"Hallo!" I exclaimed, facing the wreck and looking to the right of her: "yonder's a breeze of wind, or I am much mistaken;" for the edge of the horizon all that way was dark.

"Only another catspaw, I reckon, sir," said the man in the bow, half turning his head, but without looking. "I allow there's not much wind left in the sky arter last week's job."

"Give way cheerily, men, and let's board that hooker," I sung out. "I don't fancy there'll be much to see."

Suddenly we were hailed from the *Waldershare*.

"'Vast rowing!" I called out, for the sound of the oars in the thole-pins prevented me from hearing. I stood up.

"Hallo!" I shouted back.

"D'ye see that breeze coming down yonder?" I could hear Thomas sing out, standing on the hencoop near the davits, and his small voice stealing along the smooth surface of the water in a very thread of sound.

"Ay, ay!" I shouted; "we'll be back before it can hurt us. Now then, my lads!" And once more the two men bent their backs to the oars. Before we had reached the brig, however, the breeze was all around us; it took the *Waldershare* aback, but she hauled her foreyards round, and when she had filled, backed her main-topsail and lay waiting for us. Indeed, the breeze had come down rather more rapidly than might have been expected, and the men began to find the big quarter-boat so heavy on their oars, that had it not been for Nelly's extreme anxiety that the wreck should be boarded, I would have dropped the errand and returned to the ship.

The brig smoothed and sheltered the water for some considerable distance under her lee, and the nearer we drew to her the easier it became to impel the boat. The water under her, being unruffled, was as transparent as the rest of the sea had been in the calm, and in the cool, green, translucent depths the whole of her submerged hull, from her forefoot down to the bottom of her stern post, was perfectly visible each time she rolled away from us, showing indeed a very pretty model, with peculiarly fine and graceful lines, and sheathed with new metal.

Alongside of her, and with her gunwales just below the surface of the water, was a boat, still slinging at the davits, or at least with the fall-blocks hooked in her bottom. When I had first noticed these falls drooping into the water, I supposed that they had been overhauled in order to lower the boat, and that she was gone; but now that we were arrived close to the vessel, I observed that the tackles were jammed in the davit-blocks, and that the boat, having been lowered to the water's edge, had filled before they could unhook her; and the brig, in settling down to the point at which she now lay, had submerged the boat alongside as far as the falls would let her go.

There was the body of a man lying under the thwarts, which prevented the corpse from floating out. The water was so clear, as I have said, that it gave an extraordinary sharpness to the features and outline of the body as though it lay under a brilliant diminishing glass; yet there was enough disturbance caused in the water on either side of the brig by the breeze, that was freshening into a small wind, to agitate the depths into which we looked, the result of which was to give several changes of expression to the face of the dead man, and to make the action of the countenance so lifelike that he seemed to be speaking.

On getting alongside the wreck I told the men to remain in the boat, and jumped aboard with the end of the painter in my hand, which I hitched around a belaying-pin. I knew enough of timber to see at a glance that the vessel's cargo consisted of New Zealand pine planks—at least, the planks on deck were of this wood—and they stood up to a considerable height against the bulwarks, which were very high and

solid for so small a vessel, being at least five feet from the water ways. The sea had capsized and tumbled them forward, but amidships they still remained stowed, and offered a surface very nearly as smooth as a deck. The deck-cabin was right aft, and the end of these planks came to within a yard of the entrance to the house, leaving the deck on either side of it and all about the wheel clear. There were four little windows on each side the deck-house, with a door facing forward, and the top of it, that was led to by a flight of steps, was protected by an iron railing, so that a very good look-out could be kept from it, and it was as commanding in its way as a poop.

The cabin door was shut, and I opened it—not without a feeling of awe and expectation, for Nelly's belief that there were live persons aboard possessed me strongly, and the sight of the dead man in the boat alongside had not a little sharpened the feeling.

The cabin was divided by a stout bulkhead running fore and aft it. This bulkhead partitioned off on the starboard side three little berths or cabins, each having a low door which obliged me to stoop to enter it, and each fitted with a bunk, though in the aftermost cabin there was slung a hammock. The other part of the house, that on the port or left-hand side, was a living room, having a long mahogany table that slid up and down on stanchions, with several stout wooden chairs around it.

However, without paying much attention to these details, I entered the cabins one after the other, looked into the bunks, felt the hammock, and satisfied myself that there was nobody living or dead in that part of the brig. I then went forward, noticing as I hastened

that the wind had freshened into a good breeze, and that the little runners were tumbling against the weather bulwarks of the vessel with a brisk play of foam. But had it blown twice as hard I should have felt no uneasiness, for the water was still smooth enough, the *Waldershare* to leeward, and the wind would run the boat down to her almost without requiring us to use the oars.

The house just abaft the foremast was, as I had supposed, no more than the caboose, or galley, and nobody was in it. The deck-load covered the fore hatch, but just beyond, the deck was clear as far as the bows of the vessel, and in the middle was the fore-scuttle. There was evidently, then, a forecastle below for the men, and I kneeled down and looked into it; but it was pitch dark, though I could just catch a glimpse of the sheen of water as the wreck rolled.

The bows of the vessel being higher out of water than the rest of her, and as, in consequence, the water in the forecastle was some two or three feet below the coamings of the hatch, I thought there might be a bare chance of some one being alive in a hammock slung close against the deck, or in one of the upper tier of bunks. I accordingly called out, "Is there anybody below there?" but no answer was returned, and I hailed three times, listening with eager attention for any murmur or groan that might follow; but all was as still as death, save now and again the gurgle of the water as the hull swayed.

I lingered longer here than my judgment should have permitted me, listening and wondering if anybody could be alive down there, though insensible or too weak to speak, and debating whether I could do

any good by descending the steps to the water's edge, and groping and feeling about me as far as my arm would extend. However, it looked a dreadful hole to go even but a few steps down into in the dark, and perhaps only to touch a hammock and to feel a dead man in it; so, after reasoning a while, I rose and came away to get into the boat.

I went to the belaying-pin to which I had made the painter fast, with the intention of hauling the boat alongside, when, to my inexpressible consternation, I found that the line had slipped over the pin and had gone away overboard. I sprang on to the bulwark, and looking over, discovered that the boat was adrift and was above fifty feet to leeward, and that one of the men was dozing in the stern-sheets, whilst the other sat on the amidship thwart, absorbed in the contents of a little volume that he held close to his nose.

I immediately halloed at the top of my voice, on which they both started up with gestures of alarm, and after looking about them hurriedly seized their oars. The boat's head was pointed towards the ship, and the breeze had caught her and was driving her to leeward at a rate that every moment alarmingly increased her distance from the brig. The man pulling the bow oar strained every nerve to get her head round against the sea (that was now all of a wobble) and the wind, whilst the other backed water; but just when they had got her beam broad to the wind, the fellow in the bow suddenly went head over heels into the bottom of the boat, and as in falling he jerked his arms up, I observed that only the stump of the oar remained in his hands—in other words, he had snapped the oar in halves. The boat's head instantly fell off.

At this moment I recollected that we had shoved off with only two oars in the boat, owing to the other oars having been sent forward to be scraped, and as the men had but one oar, I knew that if my salvation was to depend upon the boat reaching the brig again I was a doomed man. However, my momentary consternation had passed, and recollecting myself, I shouted to the men to get aboard the ship as fast as they could, and return to the brig with more oars and more men. They heard me plain enough, and yet what must the fools do but throw the sound oar over the stern and, getting the boat's head towards the brig, begin to scull.

I shouted to them again, stamping my foot with anger and impatience, but they would not give over. One of them called back, "Hold on, sir! we think we shall be able to manage it," though they might as well have attempted to take the brig in tow, for every moment they were losing ground, and every moment the breeze was strengthening; and, to make matters worse, right away down in the quarter whence the breeze was blowing a whole squadron of clouds was coming up. They were white now with the sun upon them, but they were big and woolly and full, with a windy shimmer in their skirts, and astern of them was a long low line of white cloud, so that all that way the weather began to look squally enough to make me feel desperately anxious.

Seeing the two men still madly struggling to scull the boat against the increasing sea, an idea occurred to me. I sprang on to the bulwark, and looking into the boat, that hung with her back broken at the davits, I found three oars in her, one of which I

seized, and running with it to the other side of the deck, I darted it, as I would a harpoon, with all my force towards the boat. The wind helped it, and it fell some distance to leeward of the brig, but a long way this side the boat; and now, no sooner had I thrown it than I saw that it was the maddest thing I could have done, for the men would try to reach the oar, which they would be no more able to do than reach the brig, and this would prolong their useless struggle against the wind and sea, when, had they had one grain of sense, they would have steered the boat down to the ship that lay right dead to leeward and that could not be missed, and got help, and rowed back to me whilst the sea was yet fit for a boat.

They continued their struggle for some time, but finding that all their labour only resulted in their drifting further and further away from the brig and the oar, and probably being fatigued, and judging the state of mind I was in by my cries and gesticulations, and also no doubt beginning to fear that if they were not sharp they would not be able to fetch the *Walder-share*, they turned the boat's head round and, to my inexpressible relief, sculled away for the ship.

My whole attention was now directed to the movements of the vessel. She was too far off to enable me to see what they were doing aboard, but I every moment expected to perceive the starboard quarter boat lowered and pulling towards me; and why this was not done I could not conceive, unless they were puzzled by our movements, and imagined I had some motive in stopping on the wreck. But would not they see that the men had lost an oar by their sculling the boat? or would they believe that the men sculled to

save the trouble of pulling, and because the wind and sea were running them down to the ship as fast as their oars could?

By this time the wind was whistling over my head shrilly, and the sea was tumbling in a way to heave a nasty lump of green water now and again over the weather bulwark. The advance guard of cloud had^o risen with surprising rapidity and was now overhead, the sky was all heavy with passing clouds from the horizon to the zenith, and what looked to be a heavy squall was coming up hand over fist along with the wind and darkening the sea in the south.

The boat danced upon the surges in a manner that made her more often hidden than visible; so far as I might judge she had half a mile to go to fetch the ship. Aboard the *Waldershare* the wind was making itself felt, and with her topsail to the mast she heeled over in such a way as to expose half the metal on her bottom. On a sudden and all in a hurry they began to shorten sail: all three royals and top-gallant sails were clewed up at once, and the flying jib hauled down; and the rigging was presently dotted with little black figures. In a few minutes she took in her stay-sails and outer jib, brailed up the mizzen and furled the crossjack.

I could not now discern the boat, though she was no longer the object of my anxiety; my whole attention was centred in the ship. What would she do? There was such a topple of sea rising as would make it impossible for any boat to row to windward, and the only way for them to rescue me from my perilous position was to brace up sharp, make a short board to windward, heave to abreast of the wreck and drop a boat

down, then run to leeward and receive the boat, as had been done in the case of the *Jessie Jackson*.

All this time I remained calm and collected, and do not remember that I was sensible of any great uneasiness. Indeed, what had happened had all come about too suddenly to give my mind time, so to speak, to reason upon my situation; and besides, I had the utmost confidence in Mr. Thomas's seamanship, and had no doubt that he would find some means to take me off the wreck. What troubled me most was the alarm that Nelly would feel, and her self-reproaches for having been the cause of my making this unhappy adventure. But I also knew that Thomas would not let her grow too despondent, and I kept on saying to myself, "In a short while she and I will be talking about this, and making light of it, as another picturesque incident of our voyage."

The *Waldershare* swung her mainyards, and, just as I expected, braced them sharp up and headed on a line that made an angle with the brig. By this I judged she had picked up her boat, and it made me feel more satisfied to think that they knew by this time how it happened that I was left on the wreck. I gazed at her so intently that I never thought of looking to windward, but seeing her haul up the mainsail and let go the mizzen-topsail halliards, I turned my head and saw the sky all black and the sea all white with a furious squall. Before I could have sung out it was aboard. It came first in a sheet of rain that blew along in a smoke; the water boiled and frothed under the mere weight and fury of this deluge; the wind howled with the voice of a tornado, and there

was one, but only one, sharp glare of lightning, followed by a loud crack of thunder.

I watched the smoke of the rain, myself soaked to the skin, discolouring the blue of the sky, until it reached the *Waldershare*, when she vanished, and all around there was darkness like evening. I now recalled how my mind had misgiven me on looking at the barometer before I quitted the *Waldershare*. Had it fallen since? What was it indicating now? I believe I would have given two years of my life to have known. Indeed, the gloom, the howling of the wind, and the rising seas, which were beginning to pour over the bulwarks of the submerged hull like breakers on a shore, were doing their work in my mind, and from that hour I date the frightful time of suspense I was now to endure.

In order to escape the water that poured over and along the decks every time the hull rolled, I mounted to the top of the deck-house, where, indeed, my footing was safe, though I was exposed to the full fury of the wind and the rain. What with the darkness and the haze of rain and spray lashed up out of the sea, and swept upwards and forwards by the wind, I could not see further than the length of the brig around me. There likewise seemed every prospect of another gale blowing; at all events, we were in the right seas for sudden and violent gales; and when I reflected that should anything approaching the gale we had recently experienced arise, the *Waldershare* would certainly be blown out of sight, and that between me and the bottom of the sea was only the almost sunken hull of a vessel which another tempest might tear to pieces, my heart sank, the whole horror and peril of my situation rushed upon me. I thought of Nelly, and was un-

manned, and hid my face in my hands, while the rain poured through my fingers, and the heavy, dreadful rolling of the water-logged wreck kept the floods upon the deck boiling and seething against the bulwarks.

However, I was a sailor and used to danger, and, being young, I could not long remain a stranger to hope. I struggled with my despair and presently mastered it, and remembering the brandy that Nelly had put in my pocket, I drew the cork and swallowed a dram, which relieved me from the sickly sensation of cold that was caused by the furious wind pouring through my streaming clothes.

I pulled out my watch and found it hard upon four o'clock, and what may seem strange in a man circumstanced as I was, I wound up my watch, reasoning that I might forget to do so later on, and then it would stop, and I should be without time. Though I reasoned, I say, yet I believe the action in the first place was mechanical too; which I think is worth noting, as showing that one has instincts which forebode events and provide for them without any operation of the brain, or at all events without any sensible concurrence of the thinking part of the mind. Be this as it may, I gave a violent start when I found it to be four o'clock, for that would leave me only a very few hours longer of sunlight, and now God knows I was beginning to dread the approach of night, as though I was to find my grave in it.

The squall lasted for at least half an hour, during all which time the rain fell in torrents. The wind drove it all aslant; but even had there been no rain, the air would have been as thick as mud with the haze of the spray from the sea, that was now breaking heavily against the side of the brig, and blowing over in clouds like dust. It then grew lighter, and the

horizon widened, and I saw a rift of blue sky to windward; at the same moment a whole gale of wind came thundering down that swept the sea of the rain and the gloom, and cleared it like magic down to the water-line, where I saw the *Waldershare*, about two points before the beam of the brig—in other words, right away down to leeward—as dead that way as she could well be, between four and five miles distant, having evidently put her helm up to receive the first shock of the squall: and there she lay, with her head at south-west, under a close-reefed main-topsail rising and falling, and, whether ratching* or not, making, as I guessed, such leeway as must drive her out of sight before sunset unless she made more sail.

My anxiety at the sight of her rose to a passion that was like at one moment to drive me frantic. I looked to windward. The gale that had blown on the previous week had come with a bright clear sky, but this wind was storming under a sky like marble, all white and grey and veined with blue, and looking a desperately hard and stony sky. I could not in the least imagine what the weather would be by staring at it; but this I knew, that unless the *Waldershare* could manage to ratch to windward she stood the chance of losing sight of the brig in the long night, and then God knows what the end of it all would be. Now and again the sun shone through the rifts, and threw a dazzling beam upon the sea; but these glimpses of splendour only appeared to give a new edge and spite to the wind, that had settled into a heavy, steady blow, and every sea that ran poured in a deluge of sparkling green water right over the hull.

* Reaching, or fore-reaching; that is, forging ahead when close-hauled.—W. C. R.

As yet the top of the deck-house on which I stood remained untouched, though, to guard myself against the fall of a higher sea than the rest, I took a turn round my waist with a rope's end and secured myself to the iron railing. Moreover, the main-top still offered me a refuge should the seas grow greater; though whether the toppling Pacific surges which were grinding the sunken and helpless hull among them would not presently rend her in pieces, and scatter her bones all abroad, was more than I dared venture to speculate upon.

All this while my eyes remained glued on the *Waldershare*. I dreaded to take my gaze off her, lest when I looked again she should be gone; and this fancy will show to what degree my mind was affected by my peril. I wondered whether she would be able to see the wreck amid the haze of spray that smoked over her through the constant beating of the seas, and I kept on asking myself, "What will Thomas do? He *must* not let his ship drift to leeward like that. Were it blowing ten times as hard, he ought to be sailor enough to know how to hold his ground near me and keep me in sight!" And then I considered, what would I do if I were in his place? and sometimes I would shout out and shake my hand at the ship, for although I knew what I said and did, I had no control over my passions; and not only my being exposed to the wind and the ceaseless lashing of spray, wet through and with the war of the elements thundering in my ears, in a manner to deafen me and make my head crazy, but the sight of the green seas pouring in mountains over the wreck, and leaping up in a play of luminous spears and pinnacles and points which the wind shattered into spume that blew whizzing into the

air, was enough to deprive me of all nerve and make me act like a child.

About twenty minutes after the horizon had cleared, I saw them loose the fore-topsail aboard the *Walder-share* and sheet it home. My heart leapt up at this sight, for I supposed they had made out the brig to windward, and that Thomas meant to drive the ship to the southward, let it blow as it might. Shortly afterwards they boarded the fore-tack. This raised a smother of foam at her bow, and even at that distance I could perceive, when she rose to the sea, the water strike her side and flash in a quiver and veil of fog right over her. Close-hauled as she was, in order to keep her full and ratching they would require to give her an easier helm, and although she was a heavy ship, yet I knew from experience that under her present canvas, and with the trend of the sea, she would not make less than three and a half points leeward, and every point would tell against me as diminishing her chance of coming to windward of the brig before the darkness fell.

There was a whole lifetime of anguish and bitterness of spirit in my heart as I watched her. There was not a sailor aboard of her but would know that I was in a position of the most desperate peril; and many of them, I have no doubt, imagined that should they ever succeed in boarding the wreck I should not be found on her, for few would believe I should long be able to keep my footing on a hull over which the sea was foaming as though she had been a sunken rock. It was harder to see to windward than to leeward; and therefore, although I could make out the ship plainly enough, yet I doubted whether they would be able to distinguish me, even with the glass, amid

the spray that veiled the deck-house. I thought of Nelly and the misery of her mind as she strove in vain to discern with her bare sight the masts of the submerged hull on which I, who was so dear to her, sat dreading that every moment would bring me my death.

For the first time for many minutes I removed my eyes from the ship to look to windward to see what chance there was of this gale abating, and I humbly think it was God's will I should turn my eyes in that direction at that particular moment; for there, about a quarter of a mile from the hull, was a monstrous sea rearing its dark, unbroken head like a mountain among hills, bearing down with frightful speed upon the brig. Knowing how that weight of water would serve me, and uttering a loud involuntary cry, as if every instinct in my nature believed it too late, and in its passion had forced the cry from me, I threw the rope that lashed me from my waist and with one bound gained the main rigging, up which I sprang. I was just in time, and my life was saved. The sea, standing ten feet higher than the bulwark, rolled sheer over the brig, burying her as high as half-way up her mainmast. The crash and thunder of the shock cannot be expressed; it tore half the deck-load out of her, and I saw the white pines gleaming in the bottle-green and polished curl of the mighty comber as they went up and over into the sea beyond. The broken boat hanging at the davits was swept away as though it had been a chip of wood. I thought the hull had gone to pieces; she rolled on to her beam ends, she buried both her lower yards to within a few feet of the slings, and such was the declination of her masts that I, standing on the ratlines just below the main-

top, sprawled flat upon my chest against the shrouds, almost, indeed, as though I lay upon a horizontal surface.

She righted with her decks full of foam, amid which the loosened pines flashed to and fro, some leaping overboard as though darted by a hand. I got into the top, where I lashed myself securely and took another draught of brandy. Here, being to leeward of the head of the mainmast, I found myself somewhat sheltered, and sitting myself down, I remained watching the movements of the *Waldershare*.

They had now got the main-trysail on her and the inner jib; they had also set the mizzen-topsail. It was as much as I could do to make out this canvas, and then only when the sunshine streamed on her; though, being now a good height above the deck, I had a good sight of her, and my view was less clouded by the spray. Presently she hoisted her main top-gallant sail. All this canvas meant that Thomas was driving her ferociously, and I watched her passing like a cloud along the rugged water-line, gradually fining down in the westwards until I lost sight of her hull and only her canvas glimmered like a pale star.

So far as her movements were concerned I felt no particular uneasiness; for, miserable and bitterly despondent as I was, I could judge that Thomas was right in choosing to make a long board to the westwards in order to fetch the brig on the starboard tack by another board, sooner than attempt to beat to windward against such a sea as was now running in short tacks. Yet one risk it was reasonable I should be quicker to see than he, and that was that, the night being close at hand, he stood to lose sight of the brig altogether by holding on to the port tack too long; and therefore

I sat watching the pale shadow of her sails with an intensity that made me sick and dizzy, until the horizon swayed up and down as if the whole deep were composed of a single wave, until a darkness was begotten to my sight by the steadfastness of my gaze that affrighted me into a quick and bewildered glance around, for I believed the darkness real, and that the night I so bitterly dreaded was come indeed.

It still blew a strong gale, but the wind no longer came thundering down in puffs. To windward the sky looked brighter, but it was marbled with the stony clouds from horizon to horizon, and there was a hardness in the character of the light and in the clear-cut running of the water-line, and the green of the water had a wintry sharpness. I was too experienced a sailor not to read these signs aright; they meant that the gale was not going to blow itself out in an hour, though no worse than what was happening now might follow.

I drew out my watch and found that it wanted twenty minutes to six. In about an hour and a half the sun would have set, and in these latitudes the twilight was of such brief duration that it was not to be reckoned. It turned me sick to reflect upon the rapidity with which the last hour and a half had flown by, but I would not despair. I knew that whilst the *Waldershare* held together Mr. Thomas would keep by me until the weather moderated sufficiently to let him send a boat, and I comforted myself as well as I could by reflecting that before he lost sight of me in the darkness he would carefully take the bearings of the wreck, and by dead reckoning or by observation determine her position, and so in the morning pick her up again easily; for the brig's drift would be small, and he would know how much to allow for it.

Yet the prospect of passing a night on the wreck was unspeakably dreadful to me; and I prayed God that if I was not to be released before next day, the wind and sea might go down, so that I could take the shelter of the cabin, for even now I felt numbed and cramped to the bones, with the force of the wind up in the main-top blowing into my flesh through my wet clothes. The *Waldershare* was still in sight, and remaining so—nay, even growing a more defined form upon the horizon, whence I judged that she had gone about and was heading my way. She was indeed only a pale blurr upon the distant sea, like the tip of the white wing of a sea-bird projected above the water-line, and she might have been standing east or west instead of to where the brig lay, for all I could have told, had I not, by foreseeing her movements, clearly understood that she had stayed, and meant to fetch the wreck by a board on the starboard tack.

I considered how her head would lie, how close she would be able to bear up for me; and this made me turn to observe how the wind was blowing, when, to my unspeakable dismay, I found it had hauled, even whilst I had been speculating on the course of the *Waldershare*, at least four points to the eastwards; so that if the ship held on to the starboard tack, she would arrive almost at the very point from which she had started, whilst if she went about, and got her port tack aboard, she would haul out to the southward, and in either case be a long way to leeward of me.

This was a dreadful blow, and made me almost mad, for now it was quite certain I was doomed to remain on the wreck for the night; and I buried my head between my arms, and yielded like a woman to my grief and despair.

So in this way the time wore on. I felt neither hunger nor thirst. The roar of the seas as they foamed over the deck below, and the howling of the wind, were always in my ears, and now that I knew that I was to pass the night on the brig, the sight of the ship—a pale gliding speck far down in the north-west—gave me no longer any hope; it was only like an illusion of the sight which my heart had detected and was cruelly fretting over; it only served to increase the desolation of the world of waters which foamed for leagues and leagues around me, and to give an edge to the horror with which I contemplated the coming of the night.

The sun went down, and flushed the clouds with pink to the very zenith; its light shone red upon the dancing seas of the horizon over the stern of the brig, and the cloud-like sail in the north-west turned as red as the canvas of a smack, and quivered like a flame on the hard, dark-green tumble of the deep: and as the sunset paled in the west, the beacon on which my eyes were fixed expired, and the gradual gloom came creeping up over the frothing ocean, until the horizon melted in the sky, and the outline of the sunken hull below me was visible only in the flashing of the foam, and the greenish glare of the phosphorus as the surges poured over and over it, whilst the stars winked hazily in the rifts overhead, and the air was filled with the desolate storming of the gale and the weary, eternal crashing of warring waters.

END OF VOL. I.

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